Commanders in Control
Disarmament Demobilisation and Reintegration in Afghanistan under the Karzai administration

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ABSTRACT *Commanders in Control* examines the four internationally-funded disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programmes in Afghanistan between 2003 and 2014. It argues that although on paper they were part of Western powers' ambitious state building project, in reality they served the U.S.-led military campaign against the Taliban as one of the mechanisms through which foreign support to armed groups was either given or withheld. By targeting different groups in different ways and at different times, DDR programmes were shaped by the wider political context – namely the fight against the Taliban and the movement's continued political exclusion. By examining the programmes' impact on individual commanders in four provinces – two in the northeast and two in the southwest – this study shows that the programmes deepened this pattern of exclusion. Local allies of international troops used them to reinforce their own position and target rivals. Those targeted often sought alternative ways of remaining armed, including by joining the insurgency. Thus, DDR – which was largely used to strengthen those winning and demobilise those losing – promoted not peace, as some foreign donors expected, but war. The main lesson from the Afghan experience is that DDR amidst war can generate instability and violence. This is especially the case when significant armed groups are excluded and portrayed as irreconcilable even when representing communities' genuine grievances – the case in Afghanistan and other countries on the sharp end of the War on Terror like Iraq and Somalia. The state in these places is too weak to permanently exclude large groups, even with international military support. This means that to gain more control over the use of force – which is usually the objective of DDR – it must find a way to accommodate, not exclude, the main militarised patronage networks. In Afghanistan this means including the Taliban.

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In memory of Haji Habibullah

Table of Contents

Acknowledgment

This thesis is dedicated to Haji Habibullah, a tribal elder from Uruzgan. Haji Habbibullah spent hours with me talking about his life and village, for which I am enormously grateful. Like villagers across rural Afghanistan, he was caught in the currents of a decades long war, of which the 2001 international intervention and its repercussions marked only the latest phase. He protected his family and village as best he could, hedging his bets with all warring parties. But eventually the war caught up with him. In October 2015, three men in police uniform shot and killed him as he prayed in his local mosque.

I am thankful too to all the other interviewees, some of whom put a lot of trust in me by speaking out. I have tried to retell their stories as accurately as possible. Any mistakes are, of course, my own.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

In March 2008 Uruzgan governor Assadullah Hamdam convened a *jirga*, or meeting of elders. Hundreds of tribesmen from across the province crowded into his compound in Tirin Kot. The governor had convened the *jirga* to convince angry elders who were backing the Taliban to instead support the government.

Securing the meeting was vital. The threat of violence was so high that even the elders' turbans were searched. Only one man in the province was up to the job. This man was not the bulky police chief Juma Gul, but the slim and soft-spoken warlord Matiullah Khan – ironically one of people who had driven elders to back the Taliban in the first place. Matiullah, then in his early thirties, commanded an estimated 1,500 to 2000 men. He had built up his militia with money he had received for securing foreign military convoys; his income was estimated at some $340,000 each month.[1]

Ties between Matiullah and the American forces dated back to 2001. Right at the start of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in October of that year, he had helped soon-to-be president Hamid Karzai, who had just crossed into Afghanistan from Quetta, oust the Taliban from Uruzgan. Since then, he had worked closely with American troops to eliminate Taliban and al-Qaeda remnants (or at least those he and his uncle Jan Mohammad chose to portray as such). He was widely thought to have committed grave human rights abuses in these first years after the fall of the Taliban regime. Some thought he was involved in the drugs trade. But a U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF) commander in Uruzgan in 2008 was enthusiastic about him: 'He is one of the few Afghans who also hunts down the Taliban without our help'.[2]

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[1] Based on the report that Matiullah protected 200 trucks per month going from Kandahar to Camp Holland near Tirin Kot for $1,700 per truck. Kelly, "The Long Road". The Ministry of Interior (MoI) officially paid 300 to 600 fighters of the 1,500 to 2,000 fighters to operate as the highway police (Kandak-e-Amniat-e Uruzgan), but in reality Matiullah's army was completely beyond government control (Jeremy Kelly, "The Long Road to Tarin Kowt," *The Australian* April 28, 2009; Dexter Filkins, "With U.S. Aid, Warlord Builds Afghan Empire," *New York Times*, June 5, 2010); Deedee Derksen, *Thee met de Taliban: Oorlogsverslaggeving voor Beginners*, (Breda: De Geus, 2010), 155.

[2] Derksen, *Thee*, 134; Susanne Schmeidl, "The Man Who Would Be King: The Challenges to Strengthening Governance in Uruzgan," *Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael,* 2010, 34; Filkins, "Warlord"; Susanne

That the U.S. military backed a local warlord suspected of human rights abuses and drug trafficking and provided him with money to pay his fighters was, perhaps, surprising. The U.S. government had officially endorsed – even lobbied for – programmes to disband militias like Matiullah's. In fact, Matiullah himself had participated in one such programme. He handed in 264 weapons on 18 January 2007, a year before the peace jirga at the governor's compound left Uruzgani tribal elders in no doubt as to who was the most powerful man in the province.

Official statistics logged Matiullah as an effective case of demobilisation. The UN agency involved paraded his participation proudly in its monthly newsletter.[3] But in reality he was a hugely successful warlord. He did so well out of the American (and after 2006 also Dutch and Australian) financial and military support that a 2010 report labelled him 'the uncontested King of Uruzgan'.[4] In summer 2011 this defacto power was transformed into an official position: he was appointed as the new provincial chief of police. His ability to fight the Taliban (or, again, those he portrayed as such) trumped concerns about his background or the imperative of disarming his militia.[5]

Matiullah's case is one of many examples of flawed Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) in Afghanistan. This thesis studies these flaws by examining how DDR played out on the ground. It tells the stories behind the official statistics – like those that logged Matiullah handing over a few old kalashnikovs as a disarmament success. What happened to the commanders after they handed in their guns? Did they reintegrate into civilian life as the DDR programme prescribed or did they rearm like Matiullah? I argue that those commanders who were politically well connected were able to rearm, leaving smaller commanders frustrated and seeking ways to get weapons elsewhere – in many cases joining the insurgency. In this way

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Schmeidl, "Uruzgan's New Chief of Police: Matiullah's Dream Come True," *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, August 8, 2011; U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan, "PRT/Tarin Kowt – Security Programs Getting Traction in Uruzgan Province," U.S Embassy Cable 06KABUL1669, April 12, 2006. Published by *Wikileaks.org*.

[3] Afghan New Beginnings Programme newsletter, issue 5, January 2007.

[4] Schmeidl, "The Man Who," 35.

[5] He was appointed despite the U.S. blocking his appointment several times previously (Schmeidl, "Matiullah's Dream").

DDR programmes played into local conflict dynamics, often widening existing political fault lines.

Four DDR programmes were initiated in Afghanistan from 2001 within the broader context of the international intervention. The first, which started in 2003, was simply called DDR. The second, the Disbandment of Illegal Militias (DIAG), ran from 2005 to 2011. The third, the *Programme Takhim Sulh* (PTS) was launched in 2005 as the insurgency expanded. Last came the more comprehensive Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme (APRP), which started in 2010. In May 2016 the APRP, which had cost some $200 million, was suspended, after failing to deliver on its promises of 'deradicalising Islamist militants' and reintegrating them into civilian society.[6]

Data in Afghanistan are generally unreliable, but the four programmes have probably demobilised tens of thousands of armed men over the past decade. They led to the cantonment of some heavy weaponry. They may also have meant temporary improvements in security, especially through the dismantlement of checkpoints where militias harassed locals. But if the programmes' goal was to stabilise Afghanistan by reducing the number of armed groups, then the country's current insecurity, numerous non-state militias, insurgents and vast numbers of men with guns show that collectively they have failed.

This thesis, that covers the time of the Karzai administrations from 2001 to 2014, argues that the U.S.-led military campaign against the Taliban, Taliban leaders' political exclusion and the arming of militias to fight the movement posed the main constraints on an effective DDR process. It shows that DDR programmes not only reflected existing power dynamics but also deepened them, contributing to the proliferation of irregular militias and to the growing insurgency in the second half of the decade. How did programmes that were designed to encourage armed men to lay down their weapons instead have the opposite effect?

[6] Tim Craig and Mohammad Sharif, "A U.S.-Afghan plan to buy peace may be failing", *Reuters*, May 17, 2016.

In answering these questions this thesis aims to contribute to the debate on international interventions in countries in conflict and emerging from conflict. 'Afghanistan' is viewed in much academic literature as the most ambitious internationally-led state building project ever.[7] Whereas the U.S. had initially pursued a light footprint strategy that did not involve nation building and that envisioned controlling territory through the use of militias, in the years after its intervention in 2001 a broad coalition of multilateral institutions and donor countries nonetheless embarked on a project to rebuild the collapsed Afghan state.

This project resulted in the deployment of NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), established to support the Afghan government in the provision of security. In 2011, at its height, 150,000 troops of forty-seven countries were stationed in Afghanistan and around sixty governmental donors were working supposedly to further the international community's goals of establishing 'a stable, internationally 'responsible' and internally liberal, political order' in the country. 'There were parallel structures of administration on virtually all levels of government'.[8] DDR programmes were a key part of this agenda, at least on paper.

If the international community put so much effort into rebuilding the Afghan state, what explains the current levels of violence and political instability? This question has preoccupied many scholars in recent times. It has led to a host of criticisms on the 'state building approach', which will be discussed below. This thesis interacts with both proponents of the conventional state building agenda – building up state institutions in countries transitioning from war to peace – and its critics, who argue that state building is too state-centric and top-down and who seek a revalorisation of the informal and local. It proposes another lens through which to view the failure of the international community to contribute towards a more peaceful and stable Afghanistan – that of the political inclusion and exclusion of local leaders and local armed groups. In this argument it interacts with literature on spoilers, but broadens its

[7] See, for example, Michael Barnett and Christoph Zuercher, "The Peacebuilders Contract: How External Statebuilding Reinforces Weak Statehood" in *Dilemmas of Statebuilding*, *Confronting the Contradictions of Postwar Peace Operations*, ed. Roland Paris and Timothy D. Sisk, (New York: Routledge, 2009), 41.
[8] Astri Suhrke, *When More is Less; the International Project in Afghanistan* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2011), 1, 3, 6, 79.

scope from a narrow focus on peace agreements to the whole political impact of international interventions in countries emerging from conflict.

This introduction is divided in three parts. The first examines the concept of state building, the place of DDR in this concept and critiques on state building that view the approach as too top-down, state centric and technical. The second tests the literature on state building and state formation in Afghanistan against what I argue are the three most relevant contextual factors to DDR programmes: the state's historical development and its relationship with society; traditional patterns in dealing with armed groups as a conflicts' main phase ends and the nature of international involvement since 2001. These contextual factors to the DDR programmes lead to three key points of departure – assumptions underpinning this thesis that are tested throughout and revisited in the conclusion – and a hypothesis on what these assumptions mean for the process of state formation in Afghanistan, a process that the DDR programmes were ostensibly meant to advance. The third part of this introduction lays out the thesis' methodological approach and its structure.

1.1. State building: proponents and critics

Much of the recent literature on international interventions in countries emerging from conflict, including Afghanistan, has centred on the issue of state building. The early days of state building, after the end of the Cold War, was marked by optimism about the ability of foreign donors to help countries transition from war to peace through a recipe of liberal democracy, economic liberalisation and the rule of law. The 2000s, with the interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan challenged by a strong insurgency, and several unsuccessful state building efforts in Africa, brought the realisation that state building is fraught with difficulties.

This realisation was apparent in the reluctance of European governments and the U.S. in becoming deeply involved in post-Gaddafi Libya or committing large numbers of ground troops to fight ISIS in its strongholds in Syria and Iraq. Western governments began to question the wisdom of overthrowing a regime, however authoritarian or violent it was. What would follow? Can foreign actors really play much of role in building a more democratic and just society in a post-authoritarian or post-conflict

situation? An interview with President Obama in *The Atlantic* showed how much he doubted a favourable outcome of a major intervention in Syria. 'If there had been no Iraq, no Afghanistan, and no Libya, Obama told me, he might be more apt to take risks in Syria', wrote interviewer Jeffrey Goldberg.[9]

In academic literature a rich debate developed over the virtues of state building. Some scholars and other observers proposed ways in which the bilateral donors and multilateral organisations could improve the approach. Another strand of literature questioned the whole enterprise, calling it too state-centric, top-down and technical. Instead, some argued, there should be a revalorisation of the local and the informal. This led to the concept of hybrid governance, which acknowledges the existence of potentially legitimate authorities alongside the state and offers ways of international actors of understanding these and working with them.[10] These arguments were clearly juxtaposed against the state building agenda, which focused on formal institutions. In sum, state building as a concept has been central to the thinking on international involvement in countries in conflict and post-conflict; either as an agenda to support and improve, or as an agenda to resist or reshape by proposing ideas juxtaposed to it.

This thesis takes another approach. By examining how one of the most central aspects of the state building agenda, DDR, played out in Afghanistan, it shows the limited relevance of the state building framework to analyse what went wrong and to understand why it is now a more militarised and violent country than it was in 2001. International actors framed their intervention as state building for their own purposes, particularly to legitimise their presence in Afghanistan. The literature on Afghanistan – both from those supportive of state building and those opposed – has to a great extent followed that lead, examining what the intervention means for state building. This thesis instead argues that while these strands of literature offer valuable insights, some of which this thesis draws on, state building is not the right starting point for the

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[9] Jeffrey Goldberg, "The Obama Doctrine," *The Atlantic*, April 2016.

[10] Kate Meagher, Tom De Herdt and Kristof Titeca write that '[r]ather than looking at state-building as something that focuses on the state one is seeking to build, hybrid governance focuses on the process through which state and non-state institutions coalesce around stable forms of order and authority.' Kate Meagher, Tom De Herdt and Kristof Titeca, "Hybrid Governance in Africa: Buzzword or Paradigm Shift?," *African Arguments*, April 25, 2014.

discussion on the legacy of the international intervention in Afghanistan, and on the possible lessons to draw from it for elsewhere.

1.1.1. History of state building and DDR concepts

State building

The origins of the international state building agenda date back to the end of the Cold War. Whereas beforehand United Nations (UN) peacekeepers had tried to stay out of domestic politics in the countries in which they operated, new geopolitical realities opened up opportunities and a demand for the UN to launch more operations and become more involved in internal affairs. UN operations in Namibia, Angola, El Salvador, Western Sahara, Cambodia, Bosnia and Somalia, Mozambique exemplified this new agenda, which could include support in disarming ex-combatants, in organising elections and in drafting new constitutions. In 1992 UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali conceptualised these new missions in *An Agenda For Peace*. He differentiated between peacekeeping, peace enforcement and post-conflict peace building.[11]

Post-conflict peace building – the most relevant of the three concepts for this study – sought 'to strengthen and solidify peace' in the aftermath of 'civil strife'. It could include disarming ex-combatants, restoring order, weapon destruction, refugee repatriation, supporting security personnel, monitoring elections, advancing efforts to protect human rights, strengthening government institutions and promoting political participation.[12]

Peace building aimed to promote liberalisation (democratisation and marketisation),

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[11] UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, "An Agenda For Peace, Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peace-keeping," *United Nations*, January 31, 1992. Roland Paris and Timothy D. Sisk, "Introduction – Understanding the contradictions of postwar statebuilding," in *Dilemmas of Statebuilding*, *Confronting the Contradictions of Postwar Peace Operations*, ed. Roland Paris and Timothy D. Sisk, (New York: Routledge, 2009), 1-5; Roland Paris, *At War's End, Building Peace after Civil Conflict* (Boulder: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

[12] Boutros-Ghali, "An Agenda", paragraph 55. See also Paris and Sisk, "Understanding the contradictions".

which was seen as the remedy for civil conflict.[13] Jonathan Goodhand and Oliver Walton define liberal peace building as the 'simultaneous pursuit of conflict resolution, market sovereignty, and liberal democracy'.[14] In that sense peace building was a reflection of 'the perceived triumph after the Cold War of market democracy as the prevailing standard of enlightened governance across much of the world' (which had Francis Fukuyama as its most prominent proponent).[15]

State building emerged as a new approach to peace building. Roland Paris and Timothy D. Sisk view state building as 'a particular approach to peace building' that emphasises 'the construction or strengthening of legitimate governmental institutions in countries emerging from civil conflict'.[16] This shift in peacebuilding strategy, which occurred in the late 1990s and early 2000s, was informed by the view that the first generation of peace building activities, between 1989 and 1997, were too limited, both in time and scope.[17]

> Initial mandates tended to be for very limited periods, focusing primarily on holding a successful post-conflict election, usually within the first one or two years of peace, after which it was hoped that the host societies would be on their way to a lasting peace based on democracy and functioning free-market economies.[18]

State building would instead focus on building up the institutional structures that were 'necessary for democratic governance and market reforms – and, arguably, a durable peace – to take root'.[19] Whereas Paris and Sisk see peace building and state building as fundamentally different, other authors have argued that the dividing line has faded. Indeed, 'Afghanistan', is defined as a 'peace building project' by some, and a 'state

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13 Paris, *At War's End*, 5.
14 Jonathan Goodhand and Oliver Wanton, "The Limits of Liberal Peacebuilding? International Engagement in the Sri Lankan Peace Process," *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 3:3 (2009), 303.
15 Paris, *At War's End*, 19.
16 Paris and Sisk, "Understanding the contradictions," 1.
17 Paris and Sisk, Ibid., 1, 6.
18 Paris and Sisk, Ibid., 6.
19 Paris and Sisk, Ibid., 6.

building project' by others, though generally the latter term is used.[20]

Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration

The four DDR programmes that were initiated in Afghanistan since 2003 were all largely based on a UN template that had been a central component of the peace building and state building agendas. Around sixty DDR programmes have been implemented since the early 1990s – the majority in Africa, but also in Latin America, the Caribbean, South Eastern Europe, Central and South Asia and the South Pacific. . Most have been mandated by a peace agreement, a UN Security Council resolution, or unilaterally by a government. Robert Muggah describes DDR as a 'growth industry', in which over a million former combatants have participated, with an annual aggregate expenditure surpassing $630 million.[21]

The UN, arguably the principal implementing agency, consolidated its DDR policies around the turn of the century. Of particular importance was the 2000 report of the High Level Panel on Peace Operations (or Brahimi Report) that stressed the importance of DDR and made recommendations how to plan, finance and organise it. In 2006 the UN published its Operational Guide to the Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS), which lays forth the UN's definition of DDR and provided a 'coherent, broadly supported framework'.[22] The IDDRS included among the goals of DDR 'to contribute to security and stability in post-conflict environments so that recovery and development can begin'. The disarmament of ex-combatants includes the registration and disposal of their weapons. Demobilisation involves the discharge of combatants from armed forces or non-state armed groups, which can be done in ways ranging from processing combatants in

[20] Paris and Sisk, Ibid., 6; Jonathan Goodhand and Mark Sedra, "Rethinking Liberal Peacebuilding, Statebuilding and Transition in Afghanistan," *Central Asia Survey*, 32:3, 29 (2013): 240. Suhrke, *When More is Less*.
[21] Robert Muggah, "Innovations in Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Policy, Reflections on the Last Decade," *Norsk Utenrikspolitisk Institutt (NUPI)*, 1-13.
[22] Bart Klem et al.,"The Struggle After Combat; The Role of NGOs in DDR Processes," *Cordaid*, 2008, 8,9. "Second Generation Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) Practices in Peace Operations," *United Nations*, February 2010, 9.

temporary centres to massing troops in cantonment sites or other camps. Demobilised fighters can then receive a short-term support, or 'reinsertion' package. This package can include food, shelter, training, employment, tools or cash. The last phase of DDR, reintegration, involves combatants acquiring a civilian status and gaining sustainable employment. Reintegration is 'essentially a social and economic process with an open time frame, primarily taking place in communities at a local level'.[23]

The thinking on DDR has evolved with lessons learnt from peacekeeping operations, like those in Central America (ONUCA, 1989-1992, ONUSAL 1991-1995), Namibia (UNTAG, 1989-1990) and Cambodia (UNTAC, 1992-1993).[24] Of particular importance were challenges in bringing to a close the Angolan conflict of four decades (an independence war from 1961 to 1974 followed by a civil war that ended in 2002). Angola's troubles focused 'the attention of international organisations, NGOs [non-governmental organisations] and policy analysts on the overriding importance of meeting the challenges posed by the continued presence of military personnel, arms and organisational structures within a war-torn society following the formal end of hostilities'. International peacebuilding actors came to see DDR as the 'single most important precondition for post-war stability'.[25]

In the course of the 1990s DDR policies evolved in the same direction as the broader agenda of UN interventions, from minimalist to maximalist. The DDR concept changed accordingly from being seen as a purely military question, narrowly preoccupied with ex-combatants (or spoilers) to a development one with 'a concerted emphasis on consolidating peace and promoting reconstruction and development'.[26]

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[23] United Nations, "Operational Guide to the Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS)," *United Nations*, 2010, 24, 25.
[24] Muggah, "Innovations," 1, 2.
[25] Mats Berdal and David H. Ucko, "Introduction – The political reintegration of armed groups after war," in *Reintegrating Armed Groups After Conflict; Politics, Violence and Transition*, ed. Mats Berdal and David H. Ucko. (Abingdon/New York: Routledge, 2009), 1.
[26] Ministry for Foreign Affairs Sweden, "Stockholm Initiative on Disarmament Demobilisation Reintegration (SIDDR)," Ministry for Foreign Affairs Sweden, February 2006, 9. Two different perspectives can be distinguished within this new development focus. A 'transitional perspective' concentrates on the reintegration of ex-combatants, and tries to improve their longer-term social and economic position rather than focusing on immediate stability in their role as spoilers. The

Nowadays a DDR process is supposed to do many things: stem war recurrence; reduce military expenditure; stimulate spending on social welfare; prevent spoilers from disrupting peace processes; enhance opportunities for their livelihoods; disrupt command and control of armed groups and prevent resort to the weapons of war.[27]

1.1.2. Critics of state building

The international intervention in Afghanistan has clearly not fulfilled these ambitions. The experience there has influenced the wider debate on state building, which has also been informed by simultaneous failures to fulfil state building aims elsewhere, including in Iraq and in several African states. Though critics approach the topic from different angles and propose different remedies, the general tendency is to criticise the international state building agenda for being too state-centric, too top-down and too technical. They propose that international efforts to support a transition from war to peace should take the local political, military and social context into account, which means acknowledging that in these environments the state is generally weak and exists side by side with other, informal, authorities.

Two, interlinked, issues are of particular relevance to this thesis. The first is the critique that DDR (and the wider state building agenda) in Afghanistan and elsewhere has been approached as a technical process; an approach that ignored the fact that the demobilisation of armed groups inevitably generates winners and losers and is thus inherently political. The second is the continued prominence of warlords, strongmen and militias in Afghanistan and the question of what to do with them – an issue that the first two DDR programmes ostensibly tried to address by demobilising them.

First, prominent scholars argue that the state building agenda has been approached as a technical process, ignoring the local political, military and social context. Mats Berdal argues that Western attempts at state building in Afghanistan, 'while hardly coherent, have followed a liberal script'. He criticises the tendency to abstract the challenges of state and peace building. 'Put simply, there has been a failure to deal

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'transformational perspective' defines the success of a DDR programme in terms of the extent to which it resolves the underlying factors that caused the ex-combatants to take up arms (Klem et al., "The Struggle," 10).

[27] Muggah, "Innovations," 2.

with societies on their own terms and, quite especially, to seek to acquire a deeper understanding of the local context and local conflict dynamics'.

The focus has been on building the capacity of state institutions, whereas, as also explored above, 'there are alternative systems of power, influence and economic activity that crystallise within conflict zones'. Berdal argues that state builders should therefore not simply focus on building institutional capacity but on finding and supporting a political settlement (by which he means not just a peace agreement) 'that reflects and takes into account the formal as well as the informal distribution of power, influence and resources within society'.[28]

Regarding the DDR component of state building Berdal has been at the forefront of the critique that practitioners have applied standard templates to wildly varying post-war situations. This technical approach is, according to him, reflected in the UN Integrated DDR Standard, which 'has tended to concentrate on the "mechanics": how to best plan, organise, coordinate and fund what are often formidable logistical and technical challenges'. While this literature may help improve the 'mechanics' of programmes, its focus is 'almost bound to underplay qualitative differences in the historical, cultural and political context that necessarily exist among different DDR processes'. Critical factors bearing on the 'DDR challenge' are the interests of foreign donors and neighbouring countries; the political economy in the conflict zone; characteristics of armed groups and 'the evolving global and normative environment in which DDR is conceived and carried out'. These, Berdal argues, impact 'the political complexity of DDR'.[29]

DDR inherently aims to change power relations (by aiming to endow the state with a monopoly of force) and will thus 'invariably be contentious and generate spoilers'.[30] Post-war security transition should therefore be understood as a politically driven undertaking, 'the implementation of which is heavily conditioned by the parties'

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[28] Mats Berdal, "Afghanistan and After – Reflections on Western Interventionism and State Fragility" in *Rethinking State Fragility*, British Academy for Humanities and Social Sciences, April 2015, 17, 14, 11, 12.
[29] Berdal and Ucko "Introduction – The political reintegration," 2, 3, 8.
[30] Mark Sedra, "Afghanistan and the Folly of Apolitical Demilitarisation," *Conflict, Security & Development* 11: 4 (2011): 476.

political will and the general climate throughout the peace process'.[31] The sequencing of the main elements of the peace process should be flexible enough to accommodate the political interests of the warring parties.

In practice, however, DDR 'has continued to be divorced from political considerations and neglected as a political tool of a peace process'.[32] They have usually been 'externally run, biased, short-sighted and implemented in artificial isolation ... from other areas of structural transformation….'[33] Designers of DDR programmes, and implementing agencies, often view post-war situations as blank slates, assuming – incorrectly – 'the disappearance of power dynamics, interests, authority structures and traditions'.[34] DDR is treated as a quick process, in some cases even a precondition for talks or followed sequentially by SSR.[35]

Instead, DDR should be embedded in the broader peace process, with its sequencing and symmetry with other components of the process vital in creating and maintaining political will.[36] Most scholars agree that a consensus among the major stakeholders on demilitarisation institutionalised in the peace treaty that ends hostilities is the foundation for successful DDR. 'Such an agreement, if it contains mechanisms to bind parties to its provisions and police non-compliance, can facilitate the implementation of demilitarisation'.[37]

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31 Véronique Dudouet, "Nonstate Armed Groups and the Politics of Postwar Security Governance" and Jennifer M. Hazen, "Understanding 'Reintegration' within Postconflict Peacebuilding: Making the Case for 'Reinsertion' First and Better Linkages Thereafter" in *Monopoly of Force; the Nexus of DDR and* SSR, ed. Melanie A. Civic and Michael Miklaucic (Washington D. C.: National Defense University Press, 2011), 3.
32 Ministry for Foreign Affairs Sweden, *SIDDR*, 9.
33 Dudouet, "Nonstate Armed Groups," 3.
34 Mark Sedra "Afghanistan and the Folly of Apolitical Demilitarisation," *Conflict, Security & Development*. 11: 4 (2011): 477.
35 Véronique Dudouet, Hans J. Giessmann and Katrin Planta,"From Combatants to Peacebuilders; a Case for Inclusive, Participatory and Holistic Security Transitions", Policy Report, *Berghof Foundation*, 2012, 18, 20.
36 Political will comes in four forms according to Sedra: 'an elite pact among the principal parties to the conflict; the support or acquiescence of the general population and the engagement of civil society; government ownership; and an external champion' (Sedra, "Afghanistan and the Folly", 479).
37 Sedra, "Afghanistan and the Folly", 477.

However, from the perspective of rebel troops such an agreement on DDR would usually be conditional on the peace treaty's other provisions – which could imply a new approach to the sequencing of the peace process's main elements. The conventional sequence envisages rebel armies dismantled immediately after the cessation of hostilities.[38] In Véronique Dudouet's view, rebels will usually only agree to disarm 'once they are confident that they can ensure the safety of their demobilized combatants, that comprehensive agreements have been reached over the substantive conflict issues, and that their political aims will be achieved'.[39]

In other words, a consensus between stakeholders on DDR, and its subsequent formalisation in a peace treaty, can only take place if the warring parties' reciprocal claims to structural reform, 'including the transformation of the security, political, socio-economic and justice systems of governance' are planned for and met in parallel. All sides from the start should see progress in addressing their grievances. Dudouet argues that agreements in peace negotiations to establish power-sharing provisions can improve confidence.[40]

Caroline Hartzell and Matthew Hoddie argue that the security dilemma is central to the calculations of negotiating parties. Without assurances that disarmament or reorganisation will not leave them vulnerable to future aggression, parties to the conflict often prove reluctant to either reach or honour negotiated settlements. 'The government rather than rival groups must be invested with a monopoly on the legitimate use of force. Yet it is precisely this consolidation of state power that raises the spectre of the security dilemma for groups emerging from conflict'. The greatest degree of reassurance, they conclude, lies in peace deals that create as many institutions as possible to share, divide or balance power among competing groups. [41]

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[38] Security measures implemented by state and non-state conflict parties throughout peace processes include the cessation of hostilities and unilateral or bilateral ceasefires, the release of prisoners, amnesties, registration, cantonment, disarmament, and the demobilization of combatants (Dudouet, "Nonstate Armed Groups," 8).
[39] Dudouet, "Nonstate Armed Groups," 9, 10.
[40] Dudouet, "Nonstate Armed Groups," 8, 10.
[41] Caroline Hartzell and Matthew Hoddie, "From Anarchy to Security; Comparing Theoretical Approaches to the Process of Disarmament Following Civil War," *Contemporary Security Policy*, 27:01 (2006): 155-167; Caroline Hartzell and Matthew Hoddie, *Crafting Peace; Powersharing Institutions and the Negotiated*

The criticism that DDR has been approached as a technical process divorced from the local context in which it is initiated can also be applied to other aspects of the DDR process. First, though on paper policy makers view national ownership as central to DDR, in reality the input of local actors is often limited. Moreover, state institutions tend to be perceived as the main local actors that constitute that national ownership. Instead, according to some critics, the term national ownership should be defined much more broadly, and should include former combatants, NGOs and civil society, especially seeing that state institutions often have limited legitimacy.[42]

Second, the focus of DDR programmes has been on disarmament and demobilisation. These two components tend to be the most important for foreign donors and governments as they take away security threats. Little attention is then paid to reintegration, which is key for the targeted groups. Whereas some scholars, like Jennifer Hazen, in response to this problem propose to limit the R in DDR to reinsertion and deal with long-term reintegration separately, others, like Dudouet, in contrast, adopt a maximalist approach, advocating for a comprehensive, 'holistic approach', to reintegration as part of DDR. This would include the integration of disarmed and demobilised ex-combatants 'into the security, political, and socioeconomic system of governance, and the transformation of militant structures into functioning and sustainable organisations that pursue the "struggle" through nonviolent means'. [43]

Another topic in the literature on state formation and state building that is relevant to this thesis concerns the continued presence of warlords, strongmen and other non-state armed actors such as insurgents in Afghanistan, despite DDR programmes aiming to demobilise them. The accommodation of warlords and strongmen in

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Settlement of Civil Wars (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), 121, 124.

[42] Muggah, "Innovations," 3, 6; UN, *IDDRS*, 78; Dudouet, Giessmann and Planta, "From Combatants," 7, 12, 18, 21, 23, 28;

[43] UN, *IDDRS*, 157, 158; Kathleen M. Jennings, "Unclear Ends, Unclear Means: Reintegration in Postwar Societies – The Case of Liberia," *Global Governance* 14 (2008), 327-341; Jennifer Hazen, "Understanding "Reintegration," 113-124; Dudouet, "Nonstate Armed Groups," 14, 23; Berdal and Ucko, "Introduction – The political reintegration," 6.

Afghanistan after 2001 is a recurrent theme in analysis of why the international intervention failed in creating a stable country. Naazneen H. Barma argues that the international community has compromised the state building process by co-opting domestic elites 'who use the legitimacy and power resources granted by transitional governance, and the subsequent aid economy, to turn the state into an arena of rent-seeking and distribution that is then employed in the struggle for political power'.[44]

But in recent years other state building critics have pointed to the fact that informal actors like warlords and strongmen are in fact ubiquitous in places like Afghanistan and may even become part of the process of state formation. Dipali Mukhopadhyay, for example, points to the fact that '[t]he Afghan state building project is often distilled into a struggle on the part of a feeble center to tame its wild periphery'. She examines the conditions 'in which warlords are actually able and inclined to govern on behalf of a central government as subnational representatives of the regime'.[45]

DDR literature increasingly acknowledges that simply seeking to demobilise warlords, strongmen and other non-state actors is in many cases not feasible, or even desirable in the short term after a war is over. In many places the conditions for conventional DDR – such as a peace agreement and minimum level security – do not exist.

The UN department of peacekeeping operations published a report on these themes in 2010, suggesting that without minimum security, command structures of non-state armed groups could be left intact, implementing disarmament and demobilisation after reintegration, instead of before as in conventional DDR.[46] Colletta and Muggah view so-called interim stabilisation measures as means to create and sustain a 'holding pattern'; keeping former combatant units intact while buying time for political negotiations to proceed. These measures can include the establishment of a civilian peace corps; the creation of 'transitional security forces' (militias) and various

[44] Naazneen Barma, "Peace-building and the Predatory Political Economy of Insecurity: Evidence from Cambodia, East Timor and Afghanistan," *Conflict, Security & Development*, 12:3, 2012: 274.
[45] Dipali Mukhopadhyay, *Warlords, Strongmen Governors, and the State of Afghanistan* (New York: Cambridge University, 2016), 1, 11.
[46] UN, "Second Generation," 5.

forms of transitional autonomy. These are temporary measures, however, and there is no suggestion in the conventional state building literature to leave armed informal actors indeterminably in place. The central aim of DDR remains the demobilisation of non-state armed groups, including warlords' militias, and the strengthening of the state's capacity to control the means of violence in its territory.[47]

At the heart of the debate on state building lies the concept of the state and what it can aspire to be in places like Afghanistan; countries that historically never had a strong central state and that are now caught up in seemingly endless conflicts. As explored above, the state building agenda focuses on building up the central state through a focus on strengthening its institutions. Important instruments, besides constitution writing, macro-economic reforms, rule of law initiatives and other activities, are security sector reform (SSR) and DDR. These security-related state building instruments are meant, by bolstering the state's security forces and by taking out the armed competition, to endow the state with a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence. This state building aim results from viewing the state, in Max Weber's definition, as a 'claimant to the "monopoly of the legitimate use of violence within a given territory"'.[48] Current-day western states, where many of the proponents of state building come from, mostly conform to this model.

The literature critiquing the state building approach includes two major arguments against using this strategy in countries in conflict or transitioning from conflict to peace in the Global South. The first is that the state building agenda is based on a misreading of history. Western states arrived at their liberal position today not through liberal state building including democratic elections but through a process of co-opting and accommodating illiberal warlords and, where possible, brutally suppressing them. Ariel Ahram, for example, writes:

> Charles Tilly (1985) famously describes the state as a glorified organized crime syndicate. Legitimacy in the form of popular acquiescence to state rule

[47] Nat J. Colletta and Robert Muggah, "Context Matters: Interim Stabilisation and Second Generation Approaches to Security Promotion," *Conflict, Security & Development*, 9:4 (17 December 2009): 439.
[48] Max Weber, "Politics as vocation" in *From Max Weber: essays in sociology*, ed. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 85.

> typically arises subsequent to and as a consequence of long periods of contention combining brutal methods of coercion and self-interested cooperation.[49]

Ahram laments that, as he sees it, international actors in Afghanistan were committed for too long to liberal state building, including operational training that emphasised force centralisation. In his view, international actors only tried to devolve violence to non-state actors (support militias) belatedly, after all other policy options were exhausted. In other words, the implication is that Afghanistan would be less of a mess today had non-state actors been supported and accommodated from the beginning.[50]

The second argument against the conventional state building agenda is that in places like Afghanistan, that have 'a feeble center' and a 'wild periphery', a strong central state is an unattainable ideal.[51] These states were historically not strong and will never be so. In their focus on the state, state builders also ignore the rich informal landscape; a landscape that includes non-state actors providing basic public goods, such as security, justice and education; services that the state can't provide anymore because of the ongoing conflict, or perhaps has never provided. These countries should not only be seen through a lens of state failure and anarchy but rather as places where multiple authorities exist side by side.[52]

The state itself should not be viewed in the narrow terms of whether or not it has a monopoly on the use of violence, according the state building critics. Mukhopadhyay writes: 'Ubiquity of informal politics ... should not be mistaken for the absence of statehood'.[53] She argues that the Afghan state is simultaneously 'illusory' and 'substantial', referring to Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz, who wrote about African states:

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[49] Ariel I. Ahram, "Learning to Live with Militias: Towards a Critical Policy on State Frailty," *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 5:2 (2011): 178.
[50] Ahram, "Learning to Live with Militias".
[51] Mukhopadhyay, *Warlords, Strongmen Governors*, 1.
[52] Timothy Raeymakers, Ken Menkhaus, Koen Vlassenroot, "State and Non-state Regulation in African Protracted Crises: Governance without Government?," *Afrika Focus*, 21:2 (2008); Mukhopadhyay, *Warlords, Strongmen Governors.*
[53] Mukhopadhyay, *Warlords, Strongmen Governors*, 11.

> It is illusory because its modus operandi is essentially informal, the rule of law is feebly enforced and the ability to implement public policy remains most limited. It is substantial because its control is the ultimate prize for all political elites: indeed, it is the chief instrument of patrimonialism. The state is thus both strong and powerless.[54]

Timothy Raeymakers, Ken Menkhaus and Koen Vlassenroot point to what 'probably constitutes the greatest paradox of African politics today'. On the one hand there is the 'thundering erosion of African state capacity', but on the other hand 'the state in Africa continues to play a preponderant role both as an objective of contemporary interventions in the domain of (transnational) conflict resolution, and in the brokerage of local decision-making processes through street-level bureaucracies and everyday political interaction'.[55]

Jonathan Goodhand and Mark Sedra, like many other state building critics, invoke the words of Joel Migdal, who wrote that 'the state can be viewed in dual terms as a "field of power": first as a powerful image of a clearly bounded, unified organization that can be spoken of in singular terms; and second, as the practices of a heap of loosely connected parts or fragments, often with ill-defined boundaries between them'.[56] Goodhand and Sedra argue that:

> In analysing the Afghan state in transition, we should therefore not restrict ourselves to studying the formal apparatus of government. The state can also be viewed as an amorphous ensemble of forces, institutional forms, relations, actors, and practices, in which the boundaries between public and private, state and non-state, legal and illegal are fuzzy and contested.[57]

In this sense, as Sarah Lister argues, 'state building initiatives can be viewed as attempting to replace one type of rules with another, so that formal bureaucratic rules of a Weberian type take precedence over informal rules rooted in patronage and

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[54] Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz, *Africa Works, Disorder as Political Instrument*, (London: The International African Institute, 1999), 9.
[55] Raeymakers, Menkhaus, Vlassenroot, "State and Non-state Regulation", 9.
[56] Goodhand and Sedra, "Rethinking Liberal Peacebuilding", 242 quoting Joel Migdal, *State in Society, Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute One Another* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 22, 23.
[57] Goodhand and Sedra, "Rethinking Liberal Peacebuilding", 242.

clientelism'.[58]

The continued importance of the state – whether as the objective of international conflict resolution initiatives, the ultimate prize for local powerbrokers in a patrimonial system or the broker of local decision-making – means that for many state building critics it should not be discarded. Mukhopadhyay, for example, points to the 'undeniable transition' that a number of actors have made in Afghanistan from fighting commanders to strongman bureaucrats. She argues that the 'weak state' should be brought 'back in'.[59]

> What are the symbioses and synergies to be captured through a fusion of weak formal institutions and resilient informal power politics? The outcome will be, to borrow [Karen] Barkey's phrase, more of "a 'negotiated' enterprise" than a Weberian state; it will be a kind of "hybrid political order," marked by "a connection, an intermingling and an interpenetration of the norms and institutions of the formal state on the one hand and the norms and institutions of the informal... sphere on the other". The demonstrable presence of government ("hollow", frail, ephemeral, and fickly as it may be) at the periphery suggests, however, that the state is, indeed, emerging in terms that are both material and symbolic.[60]

In sum, while state building is focused on endowing the state with a monopoly on the legitimate use of force through DDR and SSR, its critics argue that this is an unattainable ideal. The state in places like Afghanistan exists side by side next to a host of informal, authorities claiming legitimacy, and, in fact, is itself 'a heap of loosely connected parts and fragments'.[61] Most critics, however, argue that the weak state is still important.

1.1.3. State building as a framework of analysis

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58 Sarah Lister, "Understanding State-Building and Local Government in Afghanistan", *Crisis States Research Centre*, London School of Economics, 2007, 3.
59 Mukhopadhyay, *Warlords, Strongmen Governors*, 12, 318.
60 Mukhopadhyay, *Warlords, Strongmen Governors*, 11, 12.
61 Goodhand and Sedra, "Rethinking Liberal Peacebuilding", 242 quoting Joel Migdal, *State in Society, Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute One Another* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 22, 23.

By presenting their involvement in Afghanistan so clearly as a state building effort, naming programmes SSR, DDR, strengthening rule of law and so forth, governments and multilateral organisations have made the notion of state building central to policy and academic discussions on Afghanistan. Thus much of the literature on Afghanistan also portrays the international intervention as state building, even if it increasingly acknowledges and emphasises that the international intervention also had another agenda, namely the War on Terror.[62]

That state building is the predominant framework of analysis is clear, for example, in titles such as "State-building in Afghanistan: a case showing its limits?" (about 'the appropriateness of replicating a Weberian state-building model onto more traditional societies such as Afghanistan')[63]; "Warlords and the Liberal Peace: State building in Afghanistan" (about the 'contradictions in the liberal peace that have become apparent in post-Taliban state-building in Afghanistan')[64] and "Closing the Sovereignty Gap: An Approach to State building".[65] Hundreds if not thousands of publications on Afghanistan have similar titles. The assumption that the international

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[62] Several scholars and analysts have in recent years argued that that the international military campaign was in fact prioritised over the state building agenda. Nevertheless, the state building agenda remains prominent in the analysis of the international intervention in Afghanistan, in most cases more so than the military campaign. See, for example, Michael Barnett and Christoph Zuercher, "The Peacebuilders Contract: How External Statebuilding Reinforces Weak Statehood" in *Dilemmas of Statebuilding*, *Confronting the Contradictions of Postwar Peace Operations*, ed. Roland Paris and Timothy D. Sisk, (New York: Routledge, 2009); Jonathan Goodhand and Mark Sedra, "Rethinking Liberal Peacebuilding, Statebuilding and Transition in Afghanistan: An Introduction", *Central Asia Survey*, 32:3, 2013, 239-254; Astri Suhrke, "The Dangers of a Tight Embrace: Externally Assisted Statebuilding in Afghanistan" in *Dilemmas of Statebuilding*, *Confronting the Contradictions of Postwar Peace Operations*, ed. Roland Paris and Timothy D. Sisk, (New York: Routledge, 2009); Suhrke, *When More is Less*.

[63] Lucy Morgan Edwards, "Statebuilding in Afghanistan: a case showing its limits?," *International Review of the Red Cross*, 2010, 1.

[64] Roger MacGinty, "Warlords and the Liberal Peace: State-building in Afghanistan", *Conflict, Security and Development*, 10:4 (2010): 577.

[65] This 2005 article by future Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, Clare Lockhart and Michael Carnahan was followed up by a book in 2009 in which Ashraf Ghani and Clare Lockhart propose a new state building strategy for 'failed states' like Afghanistan. Ashraf Ghani, Clare Lockhart, *Fixing Failed States: A Framework for Fixing a Fractured World*, (Oxford University Press, 2009) Ashraf Ghani, Clare Lockhart , Michael Carnahan, "Closing the Sovereignty Gap: an Approach to Statebuilding," *Overseas Development Institute*, 2005.

intervention was primarily a state building venture is also clear from the recommendations that the literature on Afghanistan makes, whether to improve the state building agenda or alternatively to discard it and instead look towards more informal, bottom-up solutions.[66]

Indeed, this thesis is itself on the topic of DDR, one component of state building, in Afghanistan, even if one of its central arguments is that the state building agenda has limited value as a framework of analysis for the international intervention. I thus fully recognise how difficult it is to escape the notion of state building when discussing post-2001 Afghanistan. Yet this thesis argues that only by doing so can the international intervention be portrayed accurately and the right lessons drawn from it.

1.2. Reconceptualising the international intervention part 1

I propose three alternative points of departure to analyse the international intervention in Afghanistan, and in particular attempts to disarm, demobilise and reintegrate ex-combatants. In this section I provide the background to these points, by exploring the political-military context in which the DDR programmes took place. The three most relevant elements of that context were: the historically weak state; traditional patterns of dealing with enemies after the main phase of the conflict ends; and the nature of the international intervention after 2001.

1.2.1. Historically weak state

First, a DDR process ultimately seeking to endow the Afghan state with a monopoly on the use of violence would always be a difficult enterprise. Since it came into existence in the 18th century the Afghan state had been challenged in asserting its authority over its territory by a strong society. Decades of war since the 1970s had, by 2001, led to a collapse of whatever had existed of the army, the police, the judiciary and the fiscal system. They also meant a proliferation of local commanders and fighters in the countryside. The weakness of the Afghan state, its lack of territorial

[66] See, for example, Ahram, "Learning to Live" (on informal, bottom-up solutions) and Barma, "Predatory Political Economy" (on improving the state-building agenda).

control and the proliferation of militias meant that any DDR would face significant challenges.

The state's search for legitimacy

Historically any Afghan regime 'rests on shaky foundations, because of the shallow roots of the state'.[67] The Afghan state is comparatively young, dating from the 18th century. Until 1747, when the leader of the Abdali tribal confederation (later called the Durrani confederation) Ahmad Shah established the first empire that covered the territory of modern day Afghanistan, 'the lands of the Hindu Kush' had been mostly part of larger empires, with a strong Turko-Mongolian influence from the mid-10th century. Foreign invaders were primarily interested in this area not for its wealth but because it gave them access to India or central Asia or because it gave them control of regional trade routes.[68]

Rulers adopted what Thomas Barfield calls the Swiss-cheese approach: they tried to control the best bits of the territory and leave at arm's length territories deemed unprofitable or of little strategic value. In the peripheries people had nominal sovereignty and in case of trouble rulers either placated them through alliances and subsidies or repressed them through punitive campaigns or trade embargos. In short, the government had direct control at the core and indirect control at the margins.[69]

The Swiss cheese approach was inherited by the Durrani tribal confederation that came to power in the mid-18th century and developed into a dynastic state.[70] Initially

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[67] William Maley, "Political Legitimation in Contemporary Afghanistan," *Asian Survey* 27:6 (June 1987): 707, 708.

[68] It was not the first Afghan empire but the first that covered the territory of the modern day Afghanistan (and beyond, for when Ahmad Shah died in 1772 the Durrani Empire also included Baluchistan, Iranian Khorasan, and the former Mughal territories of Sind, Punjab, and Kashmir). Thomas Barfield, *Afghanistan, A Cultural and Political History*, (Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010), 66, 67, 99. See also Barnett R. Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan, State Formation and Collapse in the International System* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), second edition, 49.

[69] Barfield, *Afghanistan*, 68.

[70] Barfield, *Afghanistan*; Olivier Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, second edition),13.

the Saddozay clan of the Popalzai tribe held the reigns of power. In 1818 the Saddozay dynasty was to be followed by another Durrani dynasty, the Muhammadzai clan of the Barakzai tribe, which held power until 1978.[71] Roy and Rubin argue that the state never escaped its tribal roots and the implications of the original principle that gave it legitimacy.[72] '[E]ven when it became most Westernised, it was to remain tribal and Pashtun'.[73]

The historical mission of the Afghan state has been to reverse the relationship with tribal leaders in the periphery, who view the state as redundant and unnecessary with regards to their own territory and only allow it a function as their external representative, according to Roy.[74] It was not until the reign of Amir Abdur Rahman Khan (1880-1901) that a standing army was created through indirect conscription, and that something like a bureaucracy was established, on paper at least. Even then the general population remained armed, however, and as David Edwards writes:

> [A] man's rifle was categorized along with his land and his wife as his *namus*, which can be translated as both the substance of a man's honor and that which is subject to violation and must be defended.[75]

Foreign relations could only be independently decided upon after the Third Anglo-Afghan war.[76]

The expanding state bureaucracy was financed with foreign aid. However, foreign aid was a mixed blessing from a state building perspective. It enabled Rahman Khan and Afghan rulers after him to modernise the army, the tax system, the means of transportation and communication, and to expand education and introduce industrialisation.[77] Yet at the same time it weakened the relationship between state

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71 Roy, *Islam*, 13.
72 Roy, *Islam*, 13, 14, Rubin, *Fragmentation*, 12.
73 Roy, Ibid.,14.
74 Roy, Ibid., 13, 14, 20.
75 David B. Edwards, *Before Taliban, Genealogies of the Afghan Jihad*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2002),104.
76 Rubin, *Fragmentation*, 32; Maley, "Political Legitimation", 708.
77 The British were a main source of external income until their departure from India in 1947, subsequently the Cold War competition provided opportunities for external funding. Rubin, *Fragmentation*, 48, 49, 59, 62-73.

and society, as it removed the need for the state to struggle with civil society 'over extraction and compliance', a struggle that is 'at the heart of the legitimacy of the modern state'.[78]

The massive mobilisation of troops for religious jihad during Anglo-Afghan wars in the 19th century again changed the relationship between the population and the central government. Whereas the state had previously been seen as the property of the ruling elite, the wars triggered growing participation in politics by non-elite groups, like the Tajiks from the north and the Ghilzai Pashtuns from the east. The Anglo-Afghan wars also led to the incorporation of Afghanistan into the international state system.[79] The increased participation of non-elite groups led to the short-lived rule of Habibullah Kalakani, an ethnic Tajik who was also called Bacha-e Saqaow (Son of a Water Carrier) from January to October 1929. But the Durrani dynasty regained power and continued to rule until 1978. The state's structure 'created a recognizable pattern of tribal-ethnic stratification with the national political arena'. The head of state came from the Muhammadzai clan of the Barakzai tribe of the Durrani confederation. Below the Muhammadzai came the Durranis, and after them the rest of the Pashtuns. Then came other Sunni ethnic groups, the Persian-speakers and the Uzbeks. Hazaras, who were Shia Muslims, came last in the social hierarchy.[80]

The Saur Revolution – as the 1978 communist coup against the government of President Daud Khan was called – not only paved the way for radical social reform but also changed the face of politics in Afghanistan. The presidency of the leader of the Marxist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, Nur Muhammad Taraki, a Ghilzai Pashtun from a poor family in the province of Ghazni, 'forever changed the nature of leadership in Afghanistan'.[81]

> [I]n Afghanistan, especially among Afghan Pakhtuns, who make up the majority of the population, kinship is inescapable and vitally important in reckoning who a man is and where he properly belongs. The most profound innovation introduced by the PDPA [People's Democratic Party of

[78] Rubin, *Fragmentation*, 13, 47.
[79] Rubin, *Fragmentation*, 132, 133. Barfield, *Afghanistan*, 130.
[80] Rubin, *Fragmentation*, 26.
[81] Edwards, *Before Taliban*, 54.

> Afghanistan] was not in the area of land reform or women's rights … Far more radical for Afghan society was the notion that kinship didn't matter, that literally anyone could lead the nation.[82]

The fall from political power of the Durrani elite, who had for centuries been considered to have a special right to the throne, meant President Taraki had to establish a new kind of political legitimacy – all the more urgent in the context of the ongoing modernisation of the state, which required 'not only capital and weapons but trained officials and a doctrine of legitimacy'.[83] Taraki and other Afghan presidents and governments after him, including the administrations of former president Hamid Karzai, the period that this thesis covers, ultimately failed in this respect.[84]

Challenges to state formation: Sharia and Pashtunwali

In spite of the growth of the state bureaucracy and the emergence of new social strata linked to it, the Afghan state would always remain a broker rather than a monopolist.[85] For example, writing about the southern province Helmand in the 1960s Carter Malkasian describes the state as the most powerful actor within a system of tribal and religious leaders who also wielded substantial power. 'Like the government, the tribal and religious leaders could resolve disputes, tax and field armed men'. They viewed the state as 'another very powerful actor – somewhat like another very powerful tribe – rather than as an entity that deserved their allegiance'.[86]

The forces challenging the expansion of the state bureaucracy did not, however, reside primarily in a locality (the countryside) or in people (tribal and religious leaders) but in traditional legal and social codes 'which stood as direct competitors to any attempt at comprehensive social reorganisation of Afghan society by the central

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[82] Edwards, *Before Taliban*, 33.
[83] Rubin, *Fragmentation*, 7.
[84] Suhrke, *When More is Less*, 152, 153, 154.
[85] Jonathan Goodhand and Aziz Hakimi, "Counterinsurgency, Local Militias and Statebuilding in Afghanistan", *United States Institute of Peace*, 2014; Roy, *Islam*, 14.
[86] Carter Malkasian, *War Comes to Garmser, Thirty Years of Conflict on the Afghan Frontier*, (London: Hurst & Company, 2013, 7, 9, 10.

government'. The most important of these codes were the Sharia (Islamic law) and Pashtunwali (the social code of Pashtuns).[87]

Islam is present everywhere in Afghanistan. Muslims comprise more than 99 per cent of its population, of which an estimated 80 per cent are Sunni (85 per cent of which from the Hanafi school) and 20 per cent Shia.[88] Islam is not only the official religion of the country, but also 'the moral basis and reference for its diverse cultures, the foundation of national unity and a hegemonic presence in every Afghan's life', according to Abdulkader Sinno.[89] It is not just an ideology but also an 'all-encompassing way of life'.[90]

Many Afghans pray five times a day, either alone or in the village mosque under leadership of the mullah – whose authority derives from knowledge on the Islamic law's texts and traditions. The Islamic law is interpreted, applied and transmitted by a body of Islamic scholars – the *ulema*. Although many Afghan rulers tried to weaken the *ulema* they sometimes also pushed (at least on paper) for the implementation of Sharia law and Sharia courts to enhance the Islamic credentials of the state and curtail the influence of tribalism.[91]

The Sharia code existed parallel to and competed with tribal codes, in particular the code of the Pashtuns. Ibn Khaldun differentiates between different tribal models: a hierarchical tribal model on the one hand and on the other hand the egalitarian type 'structured according to a segmentary lineage system'. In Afghanistan the first model 'formed the basis of the military power of such great Turkic and Mongolian dynasties as the Mongol, Timurid, Ottoman, Mughal, and Safavid empires'. Ethnic groups in the north, west and centre, including Tajiks (the second largest group in Afghanistan),

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87 Barfield, *Afghanistan*, 3-8, 184; Maley, "Political Legitimation", 708; Barfield, *Afghanistan*, 3-8, 184; Rubin, *Fragmentation*, 56.
88 Rubin, *Fragmentation*, 38. Waheed Massoud, "Why Have Afghanistan's Shias Been Targeted Now," *BBC*, December 6, 2011.
89 Abdulkader H. Sinno, "The Strategic Use of Islam in Afghan Politics" in Ali Riaz (ed.) *Religion and Politics in South Asia* (New York: Routledge, 2010).
90 Barfield, *Afghanistan*, 41.
91 Rubin, *Fragmentation*, 39, 50, 166. Roy, *Islam*, 15. The first to focus attention on the legal function of Islam was Amir Abdur Rahman (1880-1901).

Uzbeks, Turkmens and the Shia Hazaras, have been relatively exposed to the hierarchical Turko-Mongolian tradition.[92]

In contrast, the Pashtuns living in the south and east, who in 1978 had provided all heads of state save one since 1747, are organised according to the second model. 'Groups contain subgroups, which in turn contain other subgroups, whose relationship to each other is once again similar. There is no preeminent or crucial level of social organization'.[93] The gathering of tribal elders called a *jirga* and the mediation of one tribal elder who is designated a *salis ul khair* are important traditional justice mechanisms in Pashtunwali. 'Any deal concluded by a *salis* or a *jirga* could be ritualized and guaranteed through the use of traditional instruments, such as *nagha* (fine), *machalgo* (surety), *yarghamal* (hostage), or *swara* (political marriage)'.[94]

These traditional justice mechanisms existed alongside the Sharia law that was implemented by Islamic judges, *qazis*, who could be viewed as competitors of the *jirga* and the tribal leaders in dispute settlement.[95]

Islam, tribe and the state

The weakness of the egalitarian Pashtun tribal model, from a state building perspective, is that large-scale political leadership is difficult to achieve. A tribal leader lacked the right of command and so depended on the ability to persuade others to follow, while being continuously undermined by rivals who felt they also had the right to his position. This undermined the potential of tribes to evolve into larger political organisations. Pashtun kings were never able to bring the tribes fully under state control; they continued to exist in interaction with the state, giving 'primacy to ties of kinship and patrilineal descent'. Tribesmen would choose at any given moment if they would follow the state model of social organization or a tribal model.[96]

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[92] Barfield, *Afghanistan*, 26, 52.
[93] Rubin, *Fragmentation*, 10.
[94] Michael Semple, *Reconciliation in Afghanistan*, (Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2009), 15.
[95] Rubin, *Fragmentation*, 39.
[96] Rubin, *Fragmentation*, 11. See also Barfield, *Afghanistan*; Roy, *Islam*, 49.

Religious leaders were often more successful than tribal leaders in uniting large groups, according to Rubin, Roy and Barfield. 'Coming from outside the system and calling on God's authority, they could better circumvent tribal rivalries', writes Barfield.[97] Therefore Islam traditionally played a crucial role in times of crises, with a call for jihad by mullahs and *ulema* transcending tribal divisions. In contrast to tribal warfare, jihad was always waged against an 'alien' enemy, for example a foreign invader or a government deemed non-Islamic.[98]

However, before the ascent of the Islamists in the 1970s religious leaders focused primarily on civil society and not on the state. Several times they mobilised people for protest or rebellion against the state but it would be a tribal leader who would then assume leadership over those forces and would eventually take state power. Tribal leaders then sought to curtail the *ulema*'s political influence, which they saw as a threat to tribal identity. In sum, Islam and tribalism acted as the 'twin engines' of actions against the government, which was unable to establish a fully functioning bureaucratic administration covering its whole territory.[99]

Fragmentation of the state and society in the second half of the 20th century

Internal, regional and international dynamics leading to war

The effort to modernise the state with external financial aid, which included the expansion and professionalisation of the military and the civilian bureaucracy, created in the second half of the 20th century a newly educated class of people cut off from their rural roots. These actors became frustrated as a result of often being unable to find a job despite their education – because the economy remained to a great extent based on subsistence farming.[100]

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97 Barfield, *Afghanistan*, 60)
98 Roy, *Islam*, 38, 59, 60; Rubin, *Fragmentation*, 11.
99 Edwards, *Before Taliban*, 56; Rubin, *Fragmentation*, 44, 55; Roy, *Islam*, 38, 59, 60.
100 Barfield, *Afghanistan*, 211, 212; Edwards, *Before Taliban*, 49; Rubin, *Fragmentation*, 9.

Kabul University became the epicentre of political radicalism. The most important groups were communists and Islamists, clashes between which often took place in the streets. The communists formed the Marxist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) in 1965 under leadership of Taraki and Babrak Karmal – who by 1967 became the leaders of opposing factions, Khalq (Masses) and Parcham (Banner). The Khalq faction of the PDPA would win state power after the 1978 coup.

Students from the Sharia Law Faculty formed the Muslim Youth Organisation, later renamed Jamiat-e Islami-ye Afghanistan (Islamic Society of Afghanistan), which became an official party in 1973. They drew their inspiration from the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and envisioned a state based on Sharia law, linking politics and religion. Its founders, like Burhanaddin Rabbani, Ghulam Rasul Sayyaf and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar emerged from the modern state educational system instead of the traditional madrassas. They or their sons still play important roles in the conflict today.[101]

The Saur Revolution and the ensuing armed resistance from Islamist parties against the communist government intensified the struggle over the direction of social change in Afghanistan. The secular and anticlerical Khalq government confronted the rural elite through radical economic and social programmes. These programmes ranged from land reform to improving women's rights – initiatives antagonizing the conservative rural majority. The government's internal disunity (the PDPA government consisted of the rivalling Khalq and Parcham factions whose leaders, writes Barfield, 'hated each other') and its extreme violence towards Islamists and all other dissidents further delegitimised it in the eyes of many Afghans.[102]

The internal struggle in Afghanistan was fuelled by international and regional developments, which meant foreign powers lent 'covert support for alternative political elites plotting to seize state power'.[103] The Soviet Union had previously been a main supporter of the government of Daud Khan (who also received aid from the Shah of Iran) and became the main supporter of the PDPA after the Saur Revolution

[101] Barfield, *Afghanistan*, 213.
[102] Barfield, *Afghanistan*, 227-233; Rubin, *Fragmentation*, 20, 62, 115.
[103] Rubin, *Fragmentation*, 101.

in 1978. After the Soviet invasion in 1979 the cost of the Soviet Union's Afghanistan engagement went up to $5 billion per year.

Meanwhile however, Pakistan had started funding the Islamists (also called the mujahedeen) to arm themselves, mostly because of Daud's pressure on the Pashtunistan issue.[104] In the context of the Cold War the United States and Saudi Arabia also provided aid to the Islamists through the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). After the Soviet invasion the U.S. increased its financial help to the mujahedeen – from $80 million in 1980 to more than $600 million per year from 1986-1989.[105]

The immediate cause of the state disintegration after the 1978 coup was not, however, the foreign funded resistance. Instead, internal problems, like the disintegration of the communist army, plagued by ethnic and factional rifts, drove the collapse of the state. Under Soviet supervision the Karmal government (1979-1987) reorganised the party and tried to stem antigovernment sentiments through a new set of measures, including a declaration of the regime's allegiance to Islam and financial help for the clergy and the building of mosques. But these efforts met with little success.[106]

The failure of National Reconciliation and civil war

The next president Dr. Najibullah, who succeeded Babrak Karmal in 1987, intensified the government's efforts at reconciliation with the launch of the National Reconciliation Programme in that same year. The programme aimed to gain new political legitimacy for his regime (see more on this programme later in this section). It was successful in that it reduced the number of mujahedeen and brought militias into the government payroll, who then wanted to see its existence continue. But this meant the money had to keep flowing. Indeed, Najibullah planned to preserve his

[104] When British India became independent as India and Pakistan, Afghanistan proposed that the tribal areas should have the option of becoming an independent nation state Pashtunistan. If this state would then be integrated into Afghanistan, as would have presumably happened, the Pashtuns would be the clear majority there. However, the colonial authorities did not give the tribes this option and they became part of Pakistan. Rubin, *Fragmentation*, 62.
[105] Rubin, *Fragmentation*, 74, 75, 82, 83, 100-101, 109, 196, 198.
[106] Rubin, Ibid., 123, 130, 131, 136.

regime through patronage and the redistribution of Soviet aid. When Soviet aid stopped in December 1991, his regime collapsed. Its components defected to various mujahedeen factions.[107]

During the civil war following the ousting of Dr. Najibullah in 1992 the former mujahedeen 'coalesced into several ethno-regional political-military coalitions'.[108] These coalitions may have fragmented through the years of war but the roots of many armed groups operating today in Afghanistan can be traced back to them.

The militarisation of the country in the eighties and nineties fundamentally changed rural society and its relation with the state. Barfield argues that the collapse of central authority in rural areas and the rise of locally based resistance groups 'transferred real power into the hands of communities previously administered by distant officials assigned there by the central government'.[109]

Within the communities power had also shifted. Before the rise of Islamist figures leading the new political-military parties or *tanzims*[110], the main local actor had been the *khan*. The *khan*'s power depended on the consensus of his *qaum*, or solidarity group[111] – a key concept in Afghan society. Solidarity groups can be based on

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107 Antonio Giustozzi, *War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan, 1978-1992*, (London: Hurst, 2000), 170; Barfield, *Afghanistan*, 228; Rubin, *Fragmentation*, 244, 248, 245, 247, 249.

108 Rubin, *Fragmentation*, xii, 93. Much as in previous regimes, Pashtuns had dominated the top of the communist governments, even though most were Ghilzai rather than Durrani Pashtuns – especially in the Khalq faction. Pakistan favoured Ghilzai Pashtuns, distributing most U.S. and Saudi money to Hekmatyar's Hezb-e Islami. But political-military parties dominated by other ethnicities had also played a major role in the war, especially Rabbani's Jamiat-i Islami, with Tajik commander Ahmad Shah Massoud.

109 Barfield, *Afghanistan*, 228; Rubin, *Fragmentation*, 242.

110 Political military parties (*tanzims*), that aim to get national power and use ideology to gain legitimacy, are well organised, use indoctrination and their leaderships are detribalised. Not many parties in Afghanistan fully conform to this ideal type, however, and most are hybrid types, incorporating also community militia, warlords and strongmen, who aim for subnational power. Michael Bhatia and Mark Sedra, *Afghanistan, Arms and Conflict: Armed groups, disarmament and security in a post-war society*, Contemporary Security Studies (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 77, 80-84.

111 A solidarity group, or *qaum* 'designates a group as a whole as compared to anyone outside it', according to Whitney Azoy. G. Whitney Azoy, *Buzkashi: Game and*

familial, ethnic, tribal and sub-tribal relations, but also on other shared interests (for example religious or economic interests) and experiences (for instance on the battlefield) or ties through marriage. The *khan* strove to enlarge his patronage of his solidarity group, to be deferred to as a judge in local disputes and thus increase his wealth and extend his family connections.[112]

The war eroded the influence of the khans, and increased that of commanders with a background in the *ulema* or the detribalised military or educational institutions – although 'a single individual could bring to bear a diversity of resources', according to Gilles Dorronsoro.[113] In contrast to the traditional khans, new commanders did not have to seek approval from their communities, but – thanks to the external funding of the jihadi parties – could rule by force. In other words, for the first time in Afghanistan's modern history, local leaders could rule through force without worrying about their relations with communities under their control, a pattern repeated after 2001 when flows of foreign funding to local commanders resumed.

The civil war after 1992 opened more space for these new strongmen to assert themselves locally – in many cases strengthened by former communist army units. With the loss of aid from the U.S. and the Soviet Union, new alliances emerged with neighbouring countries, especially Pakistan, Iran and Saudi Arabia. The new local warlords, powerful enough to resist the state in their own area but not strong enough to capture state power, became a symbol of the 'breakdown, indeed the fragmentation, of social control and social power in Afghanistan', writes Barnett Rubin.[114]

Power in Afghanistan, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982), 30); Roy reserves the term tribe for *qaums* 'having traditional rights and customs, a system within Islam of autonomous values (honour, vengeance etc.) and a complex of specific institutions'. In Afghanistan this is Pashtunwali, both a code and an ideology, according to Roy, influencing the life of Pashtuns in the east and west of Afghanistan. Roy, *Islam*, 12.

[112] Martine van Bijlert, "The Taliban in Zabul and Uruzgan" in *Talibanistan: Negotiating the Borders Between Terror, Politics and Religion*, ed. Peter Bergen. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 99; Roy, *Islam*, 10, 22, 23.

[113] At 'the village level khans were able to set themselves up as commanders, since there was no competition from the educated class or the *ulema*' Gilles Dorronsoro, *Revolution Unending, Afghanistan: 1979 to the Present* (London: Hurst Publishers, 2000), 119-121.

[114] Rubin, *Fragmentation*, x. See also p xii and 258 and Barfield, *Afghanistan*, 246.

The Taliban movement

The Taliban movement emerged as a new force in this fragmented political landscape around 1994. Its organisation was based on the madrassa networks of mullahs and their students who had become more autonomous from rural powerbrokers as 'both the state and the rural economy that had sustained tribal leaders collapsed'.[115] Their Islamic identity meant they could rise above tribal rivalries, but they 'squandered this advantage by failing to expand their core leadership beyond a parochial Pashtun base', according to Barfield. He, and others, asserts that their ideology was not only influenced by religion but also by Pashtunwali.[116]

With Pakistan's help the Taliban captured Kabul on 26 September 1996, creating an Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. However, they had no clear vision what their state should look like, and did not develop from a social movement into a government. Although initially the Taliban enjoyed local support, particularly in their southern heartlands, due to their improving security throughout most of the country, this quickly dissipated thanks to its strict social edicts, harsh rule, its decree to eliminate opium in 2000 and because of conscription issues.[117]

Conclusion: the state is weak but still important

International attempts at disarming armed groups after the ousting of the Taliban would always be challenging against this background of structural state weakness and collapse. The western model of a state's monopoly on the use of force, the model on which the state building approach is based, seems indeed an unattainable ideal as its critics suggest. In this the Afghan state is no different than many other states in the Global South. In the Afghan case, however, its weakness is compounded by its extreme reliance on foreign aid, which complicates its search for legitimacy.

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115 Rubin, *Fragmentation*, xiii.
116 Barfield, *Afghanistan*, 261, 263; Alex Strick van Linschoten and Felix Kuehn, *An Enemy we Created: The Myth of the Taliban/Al Qaeda Merger in Afghanistan, 1970-2010* (London: Hurst & Co, 2012), 121.
117 Strick van Linschoten and Kuehn, *An Enemy*, 120, 121, 184, 185; Barfield, *Afghanistan*, 261.

Yet, while the state has been unable to establish a new type of legitimacy that is not tribally based, commanders challenging the state have also not developed into legitimate actors. To look for alternatives to the state in the informal sector, as some state building critics do, gives the latter too much credit. Social codes have been eroded throughout thirty-five years of war. The old tribal establishment no longer exists, and Islam, though still the religious staple of Afghans, has also become part of politicised agendas of the Taliban and former jihadi leaders. The countryside has been militarised and drawn into the struggle for state power – blurring lines between state and non-state. New powerbrokers often lack local legitimacy, as they are externally funded and thus focused more on winning external support to reward immediate followers than on winning support from local communities.

The state, though weak, should not be discarded. It is still important, whether as the objective of international conflict resolution initiatives, as the ultimate prize for local powerbrokers in a patrimonial system or as the broker of local decision-making processes. It should not, however, be viewed only through its institutional presence as state builders do. Instead, it should be regarded as 'an amorphous ensemble of forces, institutional forms, relations, actors, and practices, in which the boundaries between public and private, state and non-state, legal and illegal are fuzzy and contested', as Goodhand and Sedra phrased it.[118]

Though the state incorporates much more than just institutions, at the same time institutional development is important. After all, the dominance of factional loyalties makes the recourse to war relatively easy, as the recent Afghan history shows. The state building agenda's emphasis on institution building – though its focus is too narrow – makes more sense than suggestions from critics such as Ahram, cited above, who proposes to devolve power to non-state actors such as militias.

1.2.2. Long history of reintegrating former combatants

The second point regarding the wider political context in which DDR programmes were initiated after 2003 relates to Afghanistan's long history of reintegrating armed groups into the state apparatus or civilian life. This history, which could have

[118] Goodhand and Sedra, "Rethinking Liberal Peacebuilding," 242.

informed the design of DDR programmes and the international intervention more broadly, was largely ignored. Instead the four DDR programmes were largely based on the UN DDR template described above, with an emphasis on demobilisation and comparatively little effort going into the long-term reintegration of targeted groups.[119]

Switching sides normal occurrence in war

During hostilities in Afghanistan – both in the period studied and in the past – enemies typically remain in contact with each other, with many commanders hedging their bets. When one side appears to be winning, commanders on their opponents' side often seek to jump ship, or at least deepen ties with those winning. Resources and the chances of winning tend to inform decision-making more than ideology. The commanders who feature in the case studies in the second half of this thesis, for example, all switched sides multiple times.

Reintegration, possibly after disarmament in return for amnesty, can also occur after hostilities ended, depending on the attitude of the victorious commanders (who could also choose to abuse the defeated or disarm them in return for amnesty). These characteristics of armed actors are arguably grounded in the way society works more broadly. As Whitney Azoy argues:

> Social relations are temporary rather than permanent, flexible rather than fixed. Success in social undertakings comes less though moral rectitude than through influential friends. Man is less a passive recipient of social fate than an active entrepreneur.[120]

The Dr. Najibullah government, for example, used these opportunities when, in 1987, it launched the National Reconciliation Programme. This programme, which led to 40 per cent of the rebel commanders making peace with Kabul, was the historical

[119] The approaches that victorious commanders have taken to their former enemies have ranged from abuse to accommodation. Of these approaches, those that tended to contribute to stability, at least in the short term, after the main phase of a conflict were: a honourable surrender (disarmament in return for amnesty); co-optation (integration into the victorious army or new administration); or accommodation (negotiated concessions by the state). Semple, *Reconciliation*, 13-15; Van Bijlert, "Uruzgan," 102.
[120] Azoy, *Buzkashi*, 30.

precursor to efforts by the Karzai government about two decades later.

But his Soviet backers granted Najibullah much more room for manoeuvre than the Americans would give Karzai after 2001 and the programme went much further than either the PTS or the APRP programme. The main tool in Dr. Najibullah's National Reconciliation Programme were militias. One option for commanders willing to stop fighting against the government was enrolment in militias, where they would be paid and given land holdings[121] The militias offered 'an honourable and convenient way of giving up opposition to the regime', according to Antonio Giustozzi.[122] Therefore by 1990 no less than 60,000 former mujahedeen had become members of militias.[123]

In 1992, when Najibullah's government collapsed, mostly thanks to the army's disintegration, many commanders, including the current Vice-President General Abdul Rashid Dostum, joined the mujahedeen. The Taliban are 'mainly remembered for an uncompromising stance, often humiliating and executing their defeated opponents', writes Michael Semple.[124] But the movement also gained ground in the 1990s through the co-option and accommodation of militias that had been affiliated with their enemies, especially after the battle in Herat in 1995 when a 6,000 man Taliban army was defeated by government troops after it ran short of ammunition and other logistical support.[125]

> Everywhere, they selectively absorbed the rank and file of their former adversaries, sometimes even commanders who were not mullahs, particularly once the need to establish a functional army asserted itself. They even absorbed hundreds of specialists from what had been the pro-Soviet army, although they ended up purging a number of them on ideological grounds.[126]

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121 Semple, *Reconciliation*, 19; Giustozzi, *War*, 163, 164, 186, 187. Enrollment in the ALP was an option in the cases of some commanders participating in the APRP, but this was not originally official policy. The support of militias as a reintegration tool was used often in informal reintegration initiatives, for example by the NDS.
122 Giustozzi, *War*, 226.
123 Giustozzi, *War*, 205.
124 Semple, *Reconciliation*, 22.
125 HRW, "Afghanistan. Crisis Of Impunity. The Role of Pakistan, Russia and Iran in Fueling the Civil War," *Human Rights Watch*, 13: 3, (2001), 26.
126 Antonio Giustozzi, "Thirty Years of Conflict: Drivers of Anti-Government Mobilisation in Afghanistan 2008-2011", *Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*, (2012), 23; Semple, *Reconciliation*, 23.

Mujahedeen commanders who were integrated into the Taliban movement individually or with their militia in some cases had to disarm before joining, 'except the big commanders they really needed', according to a tribal elder in Kunduz.[127] In these cases commanders were issued new weapons. Similarly, in 2001, when the U.S. led Operation of Enduring Freedom swiftly toppled the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan through a combination of US airpower and friendly troops on the ground, many Taliban commanders joined the U.S.-funded anti-Taliban militias en masse.

The U.S.-led coalition invading Afghanistan in 2001, however, did not want to engage in any form of political engagement with the Taliban. For future Afghan leaders such as President Karzai and Governor Gul Agha Shirzai operating in the south in 2001 and having to deal with surrendering Taliban there was no clear international policy on the issue. When they attempted to strike deals with their adversaries, the U.S. message was that the Taliban were not welcome in the post-2001 order, as chapter 3 shows in more detail.

This stance was at odds with the traditional Afghan way of dealing with adversaries after fighting ends. It was also at odds with the West's own long and rich history on this issue, which should have been a reminder that local practices develop over a long period of time and should not be ignored.[128]

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[127] 013.

[128] In pre-Weberian Europe there were well-developed ways of dealing with former adversaries, which changed over time. For example, during the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) there was no stigma attached to switching sides (unless in the case of sieges) or surrendering. Cartel agreements came into force that provided for regular prisoner exchanges and payment of ransoms. This phase came after the 'age of chivalry' in Medieval Europe in which the knightly class had come to recognise 'circumstances in which surrender was both sensible and honorable'. Before that time, it was shameful for a warrior to surrender, and thus very rare. The systemic killing of adult males was routine. Regarding early America, William J. Campbell argues that for indigenous combatants in the northeastern borderlands 'surrender and defeat could be honourable, and did not always signal weakness'. If objectives of communities could not be met through warfare, combatants 'often retreated and sought to benefit from terms of surrender'. Lothar Höbelt, "Surrender in the Thirty Years War"; John Gillingham, "Surrender in Europe – An Indirect Approach" and William J. Campbell, "Surrender in the Northeastern Borderlands of Native America" in Holger Afflerbach and Hew Strachan, *How Fighting Ends: A History of Surrender*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

Conclusion: local practices should have informed intervention

Mats Berdal points to the importance of a political settlement that takes into account the formal and informal distribution of 'power, influence and resources within society'.[129] In Afghanistan the U.S.-led coalition could claim victory in 2001, but considering the vast international support to the Northern Alliance necessary to defeat a regime that had beforehand controlled around 80 per cent of the country, and bearing in mind that the international actors were not aiming to remain forever, it would have made sense to offer those defeated at least an honourable surrender. But a formal offer of such a surrender, which was eventually formalised through the PTS and APRP programmes, came too late, at a time when the Taliban had reorganised as an potent insurgency and thus expected – not unreasonably – much more. It also only extended to the rank-and-file, not the leadership.

Local practices of dealing with adversaries after the main phase of conflict ends should have informed the international intervention in Afghanistan, as they are key to the local context that Berdal and others identify is vital for state builders to understand. This point is crucial to this thesis's examination of the impact of DDR programmes on local commanders in four provinces. But, as Berdal argues, the political complexity of DDR also includes the interests of foreign donors.[130] Berdal writes that Western attempts at state building in Afghanistan 'while hardly coherent, have followed a liberal script'.[131] This is a view shared by many if not most scholars writing on Afghanistan. I argue instead that liberal state building was not the Wests' leading agenda in Afghanistan.

1.2.3. Military campaign against the Taliban and their political exclusion

The third point on the wider political context for DDR in Afghanistan concerns the constraints imposed by the U.S.-led military campaign against the Taliban and the movement's political exclusion.

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[129] Mats Berdal, "Afghanistan and After – Reflections on Western Interventionism and State Fragility" in *Rethinking State Fragility*, British Academy for Humanities and Social Sciences, April 2015, 12.
[130] Berdal and Ucko, "Introduction – The political reintegration," 8.
[131] Berdal, "Afghanistan and After," 12. See also 17, 14, 11, 12.

Military campaign driver intervention

Operation Enduring Freedom, after starting on 7 October 2001, swiftly toppled the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan through a combination of U.S. airpower and friendly troops on the ground. The Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-establishment of Permanent Government Institutions, better known as the Bonn Agreement, which was the result of the first post-Taliban conference in December 2001 of prominent Afghans meeting under the auspices of the United Nations, paved the way for a political future of Afghanistan without the Taliban.[132] President Bush declared: '[N]o cave is deep enough to escape the patient justice of the United States of America'.[133] Seeking retribution for the 9/11 attacks and preventing future terrorist strikes from Afghan soil remained the overriding concern of the American military engagement. '[O]ur coalition is leading aggressive raids against the surviving members of the Taliban and al Qaeda' President Bush said two years after 9/11.[134]

As Astri Suhrke shows, by this time the international project in Afghanistan rested on two pillars: a military campaign and a state building project. The U.S. initially pursued a light footprint strategy that did not involve nation building and that envisioned controlling the territory through the use of militias. But in the years after 2001 a broad coalition of multilateral institutions and donor countries embarked on a project to rebuild the collapsed Afghan state. This project included the deployment of

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[132] Also absent from the Bonn conference were the former predominantly Pashtun mujahedeen parties Hezb-e Islami and the Haqqani network, both of whom, like the Taliban, eventually started operating against the government.

[133] President George W. Bush, "Speech to The Citadel Military College of South Carolina" (Washington, DC, December 11, 2001) in *Selected Speeches of President George W. Bush 2001-2008*, White House Archives, 91. https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/bushrecord/documents/Selected_Speeches_George_W_Bush.pdf (accessed 28 July 2014).

[134] President George W. Bush, "State of the Union Address to the 108th Congress" (Washington, DC, January 20, 2004), *Selected Speeches of President George W. Bush 2001-2008*, White House Archives, 199. https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/bushrecord/documents/Selected_Speeches_George_W_Bush.pdf (accessed 28 July 2014); Bush, "Speech to The Citadel Military College of South Carolina".

the ISAF, established to support the Afghan government in the provision of security.[135]

Suhrke argues that from the start tensions existed between, on one side, the state building effort, which included holding elections, reforms of the judicial system SSR and DDR, and on the other side the military campaign. These tensions grew after 2005 as the security situation deteriorated. In response to the full-scale insurgency in 2008, the new Obama administration mounted a 'surge'; including an unprecedented number of capture-or-kill operations and drone strikes aimed at 'decapitating' the Taliban. Between 2006 and 2011 the number of American troops also increased from around 20,000 to almost 100,000 men and women.[136] The supposedly separate lines of responsibility between ISAF and coalition forces were muddied on the ground, as both fought the Taliban. During the second half of the decade the international community increased efforts to train the Afghan National Police (ANP) and the Afghan National Army (ANA). But meanwhile, in places where the ANP and the ANA were not yet on adequate levels, foreign forces employed local militias to defend villages and guard convoys against Taliban attacks. The arming of local militias ran contrary to DDR and SSR aims.

Notwithstanding the very real tensions between the state building effort and the military campaign, this thesis is based on a different assumption – namely that the U.S government throughout the whole period this study covers (2001-2014) prioritised its military campaign (that changed over time as described above) over its state building efforts, despite its frequent public statements to the contrary. This was especially noticeable in the provinces, as the case studies in the second half of this study show.[137] Barnett Rubin, a long-term observer of Afghanistan who has also

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[135] Suhrke, *When More is Less*, 1, 3, 6, 79.

[136] Between 2001 and 2012 the U.S. spent $557 billion on the war in Afghanistan, of which the bulk went to its military effort. Amy Belasco, "The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11," *Congressional Research Service*, March 29, 2011, 3; Matthieu Aikins, "Contracting the Commanders: Transition and the Political Economy of Afghanistan's Private Security Industry," *Center on International Cooperation*, New York University (October 2012), 7.

[137] The prioritisation of the military campaign becomes also clear, for example, from the detailed and excellent accounts of Mike Martin, *An Intimate War: An Oral*

served in the Obama administration, summarised the U.S. stance during the 16-17 March 2015 conference 'State-Strengthening in Afghanistan 2001-2014', at the United States Institute of Peace in Washington D.C. on lessons from the international state building effort in Afghanistan:

> It was not just that there were different goals that had to be reconciled. There was one goal [counter terrorism] and that was the reason that the United States was there; the reason that it had so much money allocated to the operation by the Congress and the reason that the troops were there. And the other goal [state building] was secondary and was justified within the high levels of government insofar as it helped to achieve the primary goal.[138]

To argue that the military campaign against the Taliban took precedence is of course not the same as saying that the state building project did not happen, though many scholars and analysts rightfully point to the fact that many projects were only partially implemented. DDR did happen, even if it was partial, and many international resources were spent on it. Suhrke points to the tensions between the state building and military goals, but Rubin's point is different. According to him state building was secondary and 'was justified within the high levels of government insofar as it helped to achieve the primary goal' – the military campaign.

This thesis goes a step further. I argue in the following chapters that the DDR programmes were not only justified insofar as they helped to achieve the military campaign, but were conceived precisely with that primary goal in mind. Thus tools that should have furthered state building – DDR programmes – were actually used to attempt to further military goals. Potential contradictions between, for example,

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History of the Helmand Conflict, (London: Hurst, 2014) and Anand Gopal, *No Good Men Among the Living, America, the Taliban and the War Through Afghan Eyes* (Metropolitan Books/Henry Holt & Company, 2014). This study differs from these accounts in the sense that its focal point is the interaction between what were ostensibly state building programmes on the one hand and the military campaign on the other.

[138] Rubin quoted the goal of the Obama-administration 'to disrupt, dismantle and defeat al-Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan and to prevent their return to either country in the future', [which] appears in many government documents'. Barnett Rubin, speech during conference on State-Strengthening in Afghanistan 2001-2014 convened by Stanford University, Chatham House and the United States Institute of Peace at the United States Institute of Peace (Washington, D.C., March 20, 2015) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=htbuEvPi5GY.

disarming warlords as part of DDR but arming them again to fight the Taliban, were rendered irrelevant, as DDR programmes were fully subordinated (through U.S. pressure) to the military campaign. It was not a question of disarming all warlords versus arming them all – two objectives that were mutually exclusive. Instead, it was a question of disarming *some* warlords (that were no longer militarily needed) and arming *others* (that were still needed). These military needs could thus both be successfully addressed at the same time by initiating DDR programmes for some warlords, while funnelling weapons and ammunition to others.

Therefore, DDR was a highly political process, not only in the way it played out but also in the way it was conceived. It was doubly removed from being the technical exercise that UN language made it seem; not only in the sense of being an inherently political process, as state building critics argue, but also in the sense of it actually being conceived as such, in contrast to what state building critics claim. The U.S. government, the main international actor in Afghanistan and main funder of DDR programmes, never approached DDR as a technical exercise but as a way of dealing with unwanted state and non-state armed groups in the larger context of a military campaign against the Taliban.

Conclusion: fight against Taliban leading, not state building

In sum, much literature on 'Afghanistan' implicitly or explicitly assumes that the international community's primary project was state building, despite the prominence of the war against the Taliban. Policy recommendations are often focused on state builders; international actors are shown ways to improve state building, or are recommended to look beyond state institutions towards informal actors and processes. This thesis explores in depth what was ostensibly one of the primary state building projects, DDR. It shows that the U.S.-led military campaign was leading in deciding on the timing of the DDR programmes, their design, their objectives and the manner in which they were implemented – much of which went against state building conventions. Of course many officials, both international and Afghan, were committed to state building and genuinely working to strengthen the state's institutions. But in the larger picture, the U.S. focus on its military campaign was paramount, including for DDR. How that worked is examined in detail in this thesis.

Viewing the international intervention in Afghanistan primarily from the perspective of the military campaign rather than from a state building angle has implications for policy recommendations. Many academics, analysts and practitioners view 'Afghanistan' as a failure of the international community to rebuild state institutions of a country transitioning from war to peace – a failure of state building. But it is questionable if this particular international intervention holds arguments on the rights or wrongs of that agenda. State building was never the primary goal in Afghanistan; defeating the Taliban was. One could perhaps argue that foreign powers always have other agendas alongside those of building state institutions, and that state building goals always compete with other foreign policy aims and interests. But in Afghanistan these other interests and the contradiction between those and state building goals were particularly stark.

The argument of some of the state building critics that the international actors made a mistake in focusing on state-centric, top-down and technical interventions is in my view moot. That was not primarily what those international actors were actually doing. My research findings show that in fact the main international actors, especially the military, prioritised supporting militias and accommodating warlords over strengthening state institutions. So arguing that a better path to state building is for foreign powers to focus not on strengthening state institutions but on alternatives in the informal sector is misleading – that is precisely what happened in many cases. The real issue is *who* they did support and who was excluded.

1.3. Reconceptualising the international intervention part 2

1.3.1. Points of departure

This leads me to the points of departure for this thesis. What key assumptions will it test?

1. Everyone wants to be included in the state as a source of patronage

Afghanistan's militarised patronage networks are primarily focused on capturing state power. Their leaders aim to use the state apparatus to expend not only formal but also informal power. The combined forces of war and society's modernisation have militarised the countryside and drawn it into the orbit of the state, blurring lines between state and non-state and eroding the legitimacy of traditional non-state authorities. The massive flow of funds from foreign donors since 2001 increased the stakes of state power in a patrimonial system. At the same time, it undermined the state's quest for legitimacy by isolating it from civil society. Despite the state's weakness, however, it is more present than ever. Communities expect patrons in the national or subnational government to provide protection and jobs. For those patrons state power is the ultimate prize, as it gives them access to international funds, impunity for any illegal business, prestige and a way to distribute patronage to followers.

2. International intervention limited access to state power for some groups

The international intervention was driven by a military campaign against the Taliban. While on paper a liberal agenda was ostensibly meant to strengthen a democratic and inclusive state, in reality the international intervention created an exclusionary political order that strengthened powerbrokers and their followers who were seen as a bulwark against the Taliban. By branding the Taliban as irreconcilable (a stance that was at odds with traditional patterns of dealing with adversaries in Afghanistan, which included negotiation, accommodation and honourable surrender) international actors created a narrative that these local partners could use to exclude personal rivals from state power and prey on them – regardless of whether these rivals had previously allied with the Taliban. DDR played into this dynamic by aiming to demobilise some non-state armed groups while keeping intact others (such as militias operating alongside international troops). The state building agenda – and especially the DDR programmes this thesis examines – because it was employed in aid of the military campaign, thus reflected and strengthened political exclusion.

3. *Failure to be included in state power leads to spoiler behaviour*

Spoiling has often proven successful in Afghanistan, as the state is not strong enough to supress serious armed challenges. The only way for the state, or whichever factions control it at a given time, to survive is by accommodating strong armed contenders (contenders who in recent decades include foreign funded commanders, warlords and strongmen or 'entrepreneurs of violence', who use violence to further their goals). The past decades have seen various attempts at accommodation. But these have never led to a political settlement that is sufficiently inclusive and consensual to be lasting. The universalistic agendas of the regimes over the past thirty-five years (communism, political Islamism, the Taliban's own particular brand of Islamism and, finally, liberal democracy) perhaps created, on paper at least, the potential for an inclusive political order that could replace the narrow and contested tribal base of the old state. Yet the regimes in reality all relied on parochial interests to remain in office. As a result, they were met with armed challenges that they were unable to effectively counter, leading to full or partial state collapse. The increasing demand for political participation of various groups in Afghan society and the failure of the state to supress or accommodate them, is thus closely tied up with the process of state formation and collapse. With more groups are vying for power, forging an inclusive political settlement has become more difficult.

1.3.2. State builders or spoilers? A hypothesis

What do these three points of departure mean for the process of state formation in Afghanistan? How has the international involvement in Afghanistan impacted this process and which lessons can be drawn from that for other interventions? On one hand, perhaps prioritising the military campaign over state building squandered an opportunity to rid the country of warlords and other challengers to state power through DDR and SSR? On the other, some argue that warlords and strongmen can help build a state. Trying to demobilise them is thus not always beneficial for the process of state formation, and in some cases unrealistic when the state is too weak to supress them by force. Some form of accommodation needs to be reached that is mutually beneficial.

This thesis argues, in line with much of the recent literature on spoilers in countries transitioning from war to peace, that the attitude of local actors towards the state, and,

ultimately, their ability to contribute to state formation, depend on local conditions; conditions that DDR programmes have the potential to radically change. This view differs from the early spoiler literature, which defined the actors in static terms, for example as 'total spoilers', 'greedy spoilers' and 'limited spoilers'.[139] International interventions are in some cases still informed by this perspective. For example, the U.S. approach in Afghanistan was informed by the notion that the Taliban were irreconcilable, or total spoilers.

My hypothesis, by contrast, is that there are no total spoilers, or, for that matter, total state builders, in Afghanistan. Instead, local actors responded to the 2001 international intervention and the new political order that it created based on their calculations of the opportunities and obstacles that it posed for them. Based on the three points of departure above, I make a prediction here that the following chapters test and the conclusion revisits.

Being included in or excluded from the post-2001 government, on the national or sub-national level, was among the most important factors in determining the response of Afghan actors. Those included had an interest in keeping the system in place; those excluded did not. Mukhopadhyay has written extensively on strongman governor Atta Mohammad Noor in Balkh, who combined formal and informal power. There were

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[139] Stephen John Stedman identifies three 'spoiler types'. Total spoilers, who want total power and hold immutable preferences, must be defeated or marginalised. Limited spoilers have limited goals but no limited commitment to those goals so they will under no condition stop their struggle to achieve them, and can thus be accommodated. Greedy spoilers hold goals that expand or contract based on their calculation of cost and risk, and should be set clear limits through socialisation (establishing a set of norms and making them the basis to judge the parties' demands, thereby changing their behaviour). Stephen John Stedman, "Spoiler Problems in Peace Processes," *International Security*, 22: 2 (Fall 1997): 5-53. Critiquing Stedman's work on spoilers, Kelly Greenhill and Solomon Major argue that no fundamental differences exist between spoilers. Rather, their behaviour is informed by structural factors in a peace process, such as the role of international actors; the relative power of indigenous parties to the conflict; their willingness to accept the risks and costs they would incur from a return to the battlefield; and, last, their varying policy preferences. All spoilers are greedy and will adapt demands based on the environment. If actors believe they can achieve more unilaterally they are more likely to resort to spoiling behaviour. Kelly M. Greenhill, and Solomon Major, "The Perils Of Profiling Civil War Spoilers and the Collapse of Intrastate Peace Accords," *International Security*, 31: 3 (Winter 2006/2007): 7-40.

tensions between him and President Karzai, and many of their interests diverged, but, as Mukhopadhyay convincingly argues, ultimately Atta was committed to the post-2001 political order. He worked to create a local political order that was authoritarian but nevertheless included powerbrokers from different ethnic and jihadi backgrounds and that had a reasonable amount of local support.[140]

On the other side, others were excluded from the government. As mentioned above, exclusion from the post-2001 political order did not only mean that it was harder to access international funds, to advance illegal interests and to get a prestigious position, it also exposed individuals or groups to being targeted as Taliban, regardless of their relationship to the movement. The loss of protection, prestige and opportunities for dispending patronage would be a strong reason to join the insurgency, especially if the actor in question had pre-existing ties to Taliban leaders and they were actively recruiting in his area.

This variable – inclusion or exclusion – does not alone explain why some strongmen governors had more widespread local support and created fairly stable local political orders that supported the strengthening of the central state, and others did not. Nor does it explain why some armed powerbrokers who were excluded from government joined the insurgency and others did not, but operated as pro-government militias.

The other crucial factors are support from international troops and political backing from patrons in Kabul. President Karzai appointed Atta not because he was an ally but because he saw him, compared with General Dostum, as the lesser evil in the north. Later on Atta became unassailable because he had built a strong local powerbase.[141] Other strongmen governors or police chiefs, however, failed to put down local roots but primarily relied on strong political backing from patrons in Kabul and/or support from international troops after 2001. These men were liable to create personalised, predatory and exclusionary local political orders. They had capital and coercive powers, which Tilly describes as key ingredients in the process of state formation in Europe. But, in contrast to pre-Weberian European rulers, they did not need to bargain with the local population over extraction, and could enforce their will on

[140] Mukhopadhyay, *Warlords*, 104, 111-114, 136-138, 152, 153.
[141] Mukhopadhyay, *Warlords*, 97, 104, 111-114, 132, 134, 135, 163, 164.

communities. They followed the agendas of outside supporters (or, rather, used those agendas to pursue their own interests), who had short-term goals that differed from those of the local communities (for example fighting the Taliban instead of establishing law and order and solving local disputes). The short-term nature of their rule and the fact that it did not depend on the consent of the local population meant they put in place no durable local political structures. They did not, therefore, contribute towards state formation.[142]

For those excluded from government, again a key variable was whether or not they enjoyed political backing from patrons in Kabul and/or support from international troops. If not, they were likely to seek refuge in the insurgency. If they did, they would often operate as pro-government militias. However, even then they were rarely state builders, as their commitment to the state was fickle, and could easily change to the insurgency if resources from Kabul or international troops dried up. They provided limited services to communities (mostly security) and were engaged in taxation. However, political backing from Kabul or support from international troops also allowed them to engage in predatory behaviour as they were accountable to external agendas and could operate with impunity. This limited their potential to obtain local legitimacy.

These factors in the calculations of local actors – inclusion or exclusion and the support from political patrons in Kabul and international troops – do not explain everything. Other factors also play a role: for example, whether powerbrokers were operating on home turf or not (which could partly explain the difference in the view of governor Gul Agha Shirzai as limited state builder in Nangarhar against the view of him as divisive warlord in his native Kandahar, where predatory activities of his men was one of the main drivers of the insurgency, according to Anand Gopal).[143] But this thesis argues that they are critical in local actors' calculations and that DDR programmes heavily affected these factors, especially if programmes are used to aid a military campaign. The provincial case studies in the second part of this thesis explore

[142] Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital and European States AD 990-1992*, (Cambridge MA, Oxford UK: Blackwell, 1992), 85, 86.
[143] For the first view see Mukhopadhyay, *Warlords*, for the second Anand Gopal, "The Battle for Afghanistan, Militancy and Conflict in Kandahar," *New America Foundation*, November 2010.

in depth how these programmes impacted the calculations of targeted groups around their relationship to the state.

1.4. Methodology

1.4.1. Sources, structure and focus

This thesis includes findings from both primary and secondary sources. Primary source material was gathered mainly in Afghanistan but also in Europe and the U.S. It includes more than 250 interviews with Afghan and western officials, analysts and journalists, tribal leaders, villagers, senior officials in the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), militia and insurgent commanders and fighters on all sides. Interviews were conducted in different ways: most in person, in Kabul, Helmand, Uruzgan, Baghlan and Kunduz and in various European and U.S. locations; some by telephone or Skype, for security reasons or because of the geographical distance. I conducted most myself, though accompanied by a translator. Local assistants conducted the rest. The interviews did not follow a standard list of questions. They were instead free-flowing so interviewees could tell their own stories. Plus information from earlier interviews had to be doublechecked, so questions evolved over time.[144]

Primary source material also includes unpublished documents on the DDR programmes in Afghanistan from ISAF, the UN and governments. These have not been used in publications on DDR before. I also draw on dispatches from the U.S. embassy in Kabul published by Wikileaks and personal observations from living and travelling in Afghanistan between 2005 and 2010. Secondary source material includes

[144] Some of the material and arguments in this thesis have appeared previously in publications, including in Deedee Derksen, "Transition in Uruzgan (2): Power at the Centre," *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, June 12, 2013; Deedee Derksen, "Armed, disarmed, rearmed: How Nahr-e Seraj in Helmand Became One of the Deadliest Districts in Afghanistan," *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, January 6, 2014; Deedee Derksen, "Reintegrating Armed Groups in Afghanistan," *United States Institute of Peace*, February, 2014; Deedee Derksen, "All the President's Strongmen," *Foreign Policy online*, December 8, 2014; Deedee Derksen, "The Politics of Disarmament and Rearmament in Afghanistan," *United States Institute of Peace*, May 2015; Deedee Derksen, "Non-State Security Providers and Political Formation in Afghanistan," *Centre for Security Governance*, March 2016.

the wider DDR and state building literature discussed above, and critiques thereof. It also includes books, reports, press releases and journal and newspaper articles on Afghanistan and DDR there. The emphasis in the study of secondary source material has been on the period from 2001 to 2014.

The bulk of the thesis – the main narrative outside this introduction and the conclusion – is subdivided in two parts; each containing two chapters. First, two chapters explore the four DDR programmes (two on disarming U.S.' allies; two on disarming its enemies); how they were originally conceived; the political agendas that drove them and what this meant for their design and implemention. Chapters 4 and 5 focus on the local politics of DDR, examining the programmes' impact at the level where they were supposed to have most effect. I use case studies in two regions: the northeast (Kunduz and Baghlan provinces in Chapter 4) and the southwest (Uruzgan and Helmand provinces in Chapter 5). I examine the local political economy in these regions and then assess the impact of the DDR programmes on it.

I chose these two regions because in many ways they are polar opposites. The Pashtun-dominated southwest is the Taliban's heartland. There, contestation has revolved around U.S. funds to fight the Taliban and control over the profits from opium production. In contrast, the ethnically diverse and economically richer northeast is the birthplace of many former Northern Alliance leaders. It hosts the main smuggling routes to Central Asia and Russia.

Unlike most previous analysis of DDR in Afghanistan, my research focuses on low- and mid-level commanders rather than footsoldiers. Footsoldiers are relatively easy to mobilise because of the abundance of unemployed young men, and because of their social and kinship ties to commanders that remain in place in peacetime. For any decisions, including on mobilising or demobilising, they look to the lower-level commanders (commanding the smallest units of five to 25 men), who in turn look to the district- and provincial level commanders or strongmen. The last group maintains the external relations, with patrons in Kabul or Quetta or with the international PRTs. Their decision making, partly based on available resources, is vital in the militarisation or demilitarisation of any area outside of the cities.

The examination of each programme and the case studies together help answer the main question of this thesis. How have conditions in Afghanistan after 2001 shaped the DDR programmes? And how, in turn, have the programmes impacted the political order – at the local and the national level? The main answers to these questions are laid out in the conclusion.

1.4.2. Researching in Afghanistan

The research environment in Afghanistan presents a number of significant challenges. Some revolve around conducting research in a war zone: village politics are extremely polarised and complex and many areas were dangerous to visit. I not only had the safety of my driver, local assistant and myself to think about but also that of my interviewees. How could I ensure that there would be no negative repercussions from their participation in my research project? How, in adverse security conditions, could I still spend enough time in the provinces to understand complex local politics?

Other challenges related to my position as a researcher from a country that was a member of the international coalition intervening in Afghanistan. I could easily have been perceived as part of the Dutch government's or security forces' involvement in Afghanistan, even potentially as a spy rather than an independent researcher. I also had to factor in that if my interviewees saw me through the lens of their biases and perceptions, I too approached them from my own point of view.

My research followed a number of principles aimed at accessing the most accurate information possible in these complex circumstances, while also protecting interviewees. These principles took time to develop. When I started conducting my PhD research, I benefitted from already having spent years in Afghanistan as a Dutch newspaper correspondent. I knew excellent local assistants, who helped me navigate the Afghan research landscape. The section below explores both the challenges to my research and the principles guiding it.

Challenges

Researching local politics in a warzone

Researching politics is difficult under any circumstances, but in rural Afghanistan this challenge is complicated by decades of war. Afghan village politics often involves rivals trying to exclude each other from power – or even kill each other – through different means, including forming local alliances and manipulating foreign donors. The experience of war means all hedge their bets. Even villagers tended to keep ties to as many potential patrons as possible. The higher up the provincial food chain, the more complicated the web of alliances becomes. Researching provincial-level strongmen was fascinating but frustrating.

This was exacerbated by the difficulty of travelling remote areas because of the security risks involved. Frequently I could not travel to villages I wanted to visit or could only stay for half an hour maximum. The main threat was kidnapping, especially when I was travelling by car to a particular place (within villages trustworthy hosts could often provide protection). This is a challenge that is relatively new for foreigners in warzones. Before the War on Terror the greatest risk for reporters and researchers in warzones was becoming collateral damage. Now foreigners are targets, which makes covering wars accurately extremely difficult.

That said, Afghanistan offered more opportunities for research in the period this thesis covers than Syria, Iraq and Libya (and even Afghanistan itself) do today. This access was generated by the massive international military presence, which was both a blessing and a curse. The presence of international troops, while providing an incentive to target foreigners (as 'invaders'), also offered a degree of protection. This was especially true in areas under the control of international forces, usually in and around provincial capitals. In these areas reporters and researchers could quite easily gather information. The information gathered, however, tended to be one-sided and pro-government. Villages controlled by Taliban were harder to reach because of the security risks involved.

The security of interviewees was another concern, particularly ensuring that they would not suffer reprisals for having spoken with me. Most wanted to participate anonymously; some because they feared for their safety, officials were restricted by

institutional rules. The only interviewees whose identity is revealed are those who explicitly requested to be named.

Perceptions

As a western researcher I initially assumed that non-Taliban interviewees would automatically feed me a pro-government narrative, as my country was part of the international coalition supporting the government. But I was struck by how fiercely critical Afghan interviewees often were of their government. If anything, they were determined to stress the mistakes that my government and its allies were making. What they would not say in a first interview was that they sympathised with the Taliban, if they did. It usually took time for people to open up about sympathy for or participation in the insurgency.

In Uruzgan it mattered that I was Dutch. The Dutch-led PRT had chosen sides in provincial politics, and interviewees automatically put me in the Dutch camp. This meant that those who criticized Popalzai strongmen like provincial governor Jan Mohammed or his nephew Matiullah, a militia commander, and had the ear of the Dutch PRT were happy to talk to me. Those strongmen and their followers, however, were more difficult to interview and suspicious of my agenda. This was particularly true with Matiullah, whom I interviewed four times. The last time I got an interview only after three days of calling his assistants and, when that yielded nothing, going to his compound and knocking on his door. In the end we spoke for a long time but throughout he kept reminding me how badly he had been treated by the Dutch and closely monitored my reaction.

What of my own perception of interviewees? I struggled most with two views that dominated the discourse on Afghanistan in Holland. The first was the generally held western view that the war in Afghanistan was a conflict between a foreign-backed "moderate" government and a "religious extremist" Taliban insurgency, with the Afghan population divided along similar lines. The second was the notion that international actors could or should remove from office powerbrokers who engaged in human rights abuses, a view that dominated among Dutch interlocutors.

Through my research, and particularly my ability to spend time on the ground, outside cities and towns and not constricted by government rules on who I could interact with, I began to see the problems with these perspectives. It became clear that the conflict was not binary. Rather, many fault lines exist in Afghanistan, and divisions are seldom absolute.

To regard anyone with blood on their hands as unfit for office was a position impossible to maintain in war-torn Afghanistan. Most powerbrokers had already been fighting for decades. Plus, those who would be removed from government would start opposing it, either by joining the insurgency or by provoking instability in other ways to show their value as stabilisers. At the same time, assuming that government officials' human rights violations mattered less for Afghans than they did for the Dutch was also mistaken – not only from a principled point of view but also knowing that the insurgency against the government was driven to a great extent by anger about those abuses.

Perhaps most dangerous was to view local allies' attitudes on human rights as fixed. Research showed me the extent to which foreign patronage influenced their behaviour on human rights; mostly, unfortunately, negatively. To remove human rights offenders from office – the Dutch official policy – did not stop abuses. If anything powerbrokers would operate with greater impunity, provided they maintained their support from foreign military, patrons in Kabul or Taliban leaders. Potential for positive influence overall lay more in the official sphere than outside it.

Methods

To navigate these challenges I followed a number of principles, drawing on the years I had been working in Afghanistan as a reporter.

Interview all sides

The first was to seek information from all sides. As mentioned, information from the international actors and their local allies was relatively easy to access. More challenging was to get information from villages under Taliban control. Interviews

with Taliban commanders often involved travelling to the grey areas between those dominated by the government and those under Taliban control. Only such areas could offer relative safety to both sides. We would usually meet in the house of a trusted third party. Another way was by phone, though interviewees would say far less than they would in person. Village elders living in Taliban-controlled areas I could usually interview in areas controlled by the government. Those who could not travel could be reached by phone, though again those interviews would usually yield less than meeting face-to-face. But they could still be a good complement to in-person interviews, especially if the interviewees knew me or my assistant personally.

Talking to 'all sides' took me, however, beyond the international government-versus-Taliban narrative; a narrative that local groups perhaps used as cover to fight each other but that masked an array of constantly shifting rivalries and alliances. Often it was hard to even know what 'all sides' even were. The only way was often to simply talk to as many people as possible. Even then, it often felt that was only scratching the surface. But nonetheless, hearing from as many sides as possible gave me different narratives and challenged my Western perspectives.

This meant talking to all relevant actors, included to some of the worst human rights violators, whether Taliban commanders, officials or strongmen. From a 'Dutch' perspective it would have been easier to just talk to victims. But not taking into account the view of armed actors would have rendered this study on DDR in Afghanistan worthless. Listening to their views helped me understand their motives. It helped me understanding why Afghanistan is today more militarised than it was at the start of the international intervention in 2001; the first step to knowing what, if anything, can be done about it.

Conduct follow-up interviews

My second principle was to interview people more than once. Most interviewees in Annex 1 I interviewed several times. This allowed me to build trust (or at least partial trust), which led to better information. Interviewees would often open up about local rivalries or about ties to the Taliban movement only after more than one interview. This also enabled me to 'weigh' their words better. Some interviewees were naturally

more nuanced and truthful than others – like anywhere in the world. This would only become apparent over time, by comparing their assertions with those of others. Last, having time intervals between interviews could also give me an insight into changing alliances, into the fluidity of Afghan village politics.

Interview in different locations

My third principle was to try and talk to each interviewee in different locations. Much information could be gleaned from the interviewee's immediate environment: the compound, cars, land, spouses and children, armed bodyguards, people in the guesthouse, the way other villagers treated the interviewee, the way he or she carried himself or herself around the village. Interviewing someone in his or her village carried the disadvantage, however, that he or she would be restricted in what they could say, as others were always around. Thus I also tried to meet up with interviewees in provincial capitals or Kabul, as a one-to-one interview (with a translator present) could yield more information and complement what I had seen in the village.

Meeting interviewees in their village and in a provincial capital or Kabul was, however, a best-case scenario. In many cases I could not travel to home villages because of security risks (more on the road there than in the village itself). Or, alternatively, if I could visit a village it was rarely guaranteed that I would later catch people travelling from that village to Kabul. But I tried to do so.

The interview team

The fourth principle concerned the interviewing team. Here there were no hard and fast rules. On the contrary, it varied. The only real rule was to reflect on what would be the best set up for each interview, factoring in interviewees' perceptions of me, of my local assistants and, in turn, our perceptions of them. I usually conducted interviews together with a local assistant, who would set up the interview and translate, though on some occasions local assistants or I conducted interviews alone. Other factors considered were language, with some assistants speaking both Dari and Pashtu and some only Dari; whether an assistant lived in the area of the interviewee or

out of town; whether they had links to the same powerbrokers as the interviewee or whether it was better to have someone neutral and so forth. I always reflected on which set up an interviewee would be most comfortable with, and most likely to talk freely.

Check, check and double check

The fifth principle was to triangulate each piece of information by seeking more sources and confirmation from different sides of the political spectrum. This was painstaking work, considering the security challenges, the fact that little is documented and the long-running blame game in Afghanistan. Everyone proclaims to be the victim of their rival's predation. And indeed, most people are victims, even if they are often also perpetrators. Stories also tended to change slightly with each interation. In some cases, they fell apart under scrutiny and to my dismay I had to discard some of the best ones. In other instances, extra interviews strengthened and added nuance to a story. This thesis thus only incorporates those findings that withstood rigorous checking.

Protect sources

The last and perhaps most important principle was to make sure interviewees were fully informed about my project and protected from negative repercussions from their participation. When these priorities clashed I put interviewees' interests first. For example, most stories – and their sources – in this thesis are anonymous. This has meant that I have often not provided all the details of every story, even though this has meant in some cases weakening the narrative.

Before each interview, interlocutors were fully informed of the research project: the institution I was conducting research for; my role as a PhD student; the purpose of the research; its topic, the main hypotheses, questions; its geographical reach, research methodology and that the thesis would ultimately be published. I did not, however, divulge the names or other personal information of other interviewees, even though people often asked. At most I would give general descriptions of the type of people I

had interviewed previously (for example, ‘parliamentarians’; ‘police’; ‘religious leaders’ or ‘tribal elders’).

I gave interviewees the possibility to speak on or off the record. Most chose to speak off record, either for security reasons (for many Afghans) or because their status as officials did not permit them to speak publicly (for many internationals). Only the identities of those who explicitly asked to speak on the record are revealed.

Making sure that interviewees could really speak anonymously, and thereby ensuring their safety, was extremely hard, especially in the countryside. Every villager knew about the presence of a foreigner shorty after her or his arrival. Moreover, interviews usually took place in the presence of the entourage of the person in question. In these cases, I would ask non-sensitive questions and try and follow-up with the person when he or she travelled to the provincial capital or Kabul.

Before conducting interviews local assistants working with me had to agree to keep all information confidential. In addition, I would select local assistants that interviewees were comfortable with. Sometimes this mean someone from the same area; sometimes someone from elsewhere.

Conducting research in Afghanistan was challenging for several reasons: complicated village politics; insecurity; my origins in a country that was part of the international coalition intervening in Afghanistan, which influenced interviewees’ perceptions of me and my perceptions of them. The principles above – talking to all sides; talking to the same person more than once; interviewing people in different locations; reflecting on and flexibility with the composition of the interview team; triangulating findings; and putting the safety of interlocutors foremost – helped navigate those challenges in a manner that was ethical and responsible.

Chapter 2 Demobilising Friends: DDR and DIAG

2.1. Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR)

In the years after the Bonn Conference, the U.S. and its international allies gradually realised that their early accommodation of Northern Alliance leaders could prove problematic. While the UN Security Council had in 2001 mandated a multinational force, ISAF, to provide security in Kabul, Defense Minister Mohammad Qasim Fahim's militias remained in the capital. The president of the interim government, Hamid Karzai, a Pashtun from the south, was 'a virtual prisoner in the palace, guarded by U.S. personnel because the Northern Alliance troops of his defense minister, General Mohammed Fahim, could not be sufficiently trusted with his life'.[145]

Outside the capital, especially in the north and west, Northern Alliance warlords and strongmen (and some former commanders from Najibullah's militias) carved out fiefs, levied taxes on the local population and took control of the growing drugs business, weapons smuggling and customs. In the absence of a functioning army and police, the international community had become fully reliant on warlords and strongmen to provide security. The initial emphasis of the U.S. and UN on a 'light footprint' in Afghanistan meant the UN Security Council had not authorised ISAF to expand beyond Kabul and help secure the countryside until 2003.[146] By that time governor Ismael Khan held 'near-total sway' over Herat province in the west and General Dostum and Atta were battling for control in the north, which eventually led to several violent clashes and numerous deaths. [147]

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[145] Tony Karon, "The U.S. Says the Afghanistan War is Over. The Taliban Aren't So Sure," *Time Magazine*, May 6, 2003. Mohammad Qasim Fahim (1957-2014), who was nicknamed Marshal Fahim because of his rank of Field Marshal, served as Minister of Defense (2001-2004) and Vice-President (2002-2004 and 2009-2014) in the Karzai administrations.

[146] Even then, ISAF would only deploy 250 personnel to the quiet Kunduz province. It was not until 2006 that ISAF expanded to the most restive areas (the south and southeast). Suhrke, *When More is Less*, 29-31.

[147] Suhrke *When More is Less*, 77; Mukhodadhyay, *Warlords,* 93-94; Barnett R. Rubin, "Identifying Options and Entry Points for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration in Afghanistan," in *Confronting Afghanistan's Security Dilemma, Reforming the Security Sector*, ed. Mark Sedra. (Bonn: Bonn International Center for

The preeminent role of the Shura-e Nazar faction of Jamiat – the faction led by Ahmad Shah Massoud until he was assassinated two days before 9/11 – in the post-2001 security landscape was of particular concern to many foreign officials. Fahim, who was the former right-hand man of Massoud, wasted no time to insert loyalists in the Ministry of Defense (MoD), and by early 2002 some ninety of the hundred army generals were Tajiks from the Panjshir province. He also used his position to appoint Shura-e Nazar affiliated commanders in the new Afghan Military Force (AMF), an eight corps structure that was superimposed on the militias of the Northern Alliance (the Northern Alliance was formally dissolved in April 2002 during a meeting of donor nations in Geneva). Kabul and the northeast, the Panjshiri heartland, 'saw an almost immediate proliferation of military units, with no less than fourteen divisions and several smaller units in existence by the end of 2002'. The west was given only four divisions and the south another four.[148]

The AMF thus became a 'parking area' for a variety of armed former Northern Alliance militias; keeping them armed and providing commanders with some funding and a claim on a future position in the new security forces or the government.[149] Michael Semple writes:

> In the war between the Northern Alliance and the Taliban the only substantial fronts of the Northern Alliance in the north got smaller and smaller over time. Yet what happened in the days of the collapse of the Taliban was that the old mujahideen commanders reassembled many of their men, [even though] they had not been involved in resistance. These forces were [meant to] strengthen the hands of the commanders to be political leaders. They set up new militias with impressive sounding unit numbers; not as fighters to fight enemies but as followers of strong men, who had entitlement. Fahim's achievement was to bring that entitlement into public sector. A clause of the Bonn Agreement

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Conversion, 2002); Pamela Constable, "Karzai Fires Militia Leader Who Resisted His Authority," *Washington Post*, September 12, 2004.

[148] UNAMA, "DDR in Kabul," code cable from the then head of UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Lakhdar Brahimi, to UN headquarters in New York, August 18, 2003; Suhrke, *When More is Less*, 76; Anja Manuel and P.W. Singer, "A New Model Army", *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2002; Antonio Giustozzi, "Military Reform in Afghanistan", in *Confronting Afghanistan's Security Dilemma, Reforming the Security Sector*, ed. Mark Sedra, (Bonn: Bonn International Center for Conversion, 2002).

[149] Giustozzi, "Military Reform"; 556; 428.

> [said that] all forces must recognise the authority of the Ministry of Defense. By gathering up all his old friends Fahim tried to consolidate his power by writing them up in books of the Defense ministry. For this, he relied on the largesse of the international community.

'Fahim made units in all provinces for his relatives and commanders and gave them weapons, money and fuel', said a high-ranking Shura-ye Nazar member, who was Ministry of Defense official at the time. 'In the meantime he promised the international community that he would dismantle them. It was a game. I was against it, because if you give privileges to a division commander you essentially give privileges to a hundred sub-commanders. When you take these privileges away there is trouble.'[150]

While diplomats and policy-makers saw the disarmament of the AMF militias as a precondition for security, they still feared that it would provoke a 'negative reaction' from Panjshiris[151]. They recognized that the Shura-ye Nazar faction was in 2003 'already under considerable pressure to release their stranglehold on the Ministry of Defence'.[152] It was one of many times foreigners in Afghanistan deliberated between short-term stability and long-term democratic reform.

Problematically, the Bonn Agreement did not contain a provision on DDR. This was mostly because in 2001 the international community had chosen to not antagonise the Northern Alliance leaders – by calling for their demobilisation – and instead accommodate them. Attempts by drafters to include a detailed DDR provision in the Bonn Agreement resulted in furious reactions from jihadi leaders, according to Barnett Rubin. In the end the Bonn Agreement had hailed them as heroes and the final text only read that all armed groups would come under the authority of the interim administration and that they would be 'reorganized according to the requirements of

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[150] 428.
[151] Called after the Panjshir Valley many members of the Shura-ye Nazar faction of Jamiat – which was once led by Ahmad Shah Massoud – came from.
[152] UNAMA, "DDR in Kabul," code cable from the then head of UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Lakhdar Brahimi, to UN headquarters in New York, August 18, 2003.

the new Afghan security and armed forces'.[153] Rubin argues that participants of the Bonn Conference took this to mean eventual demobilisation, but 'this was not explicit'.[154]

Security concerns about warlords and strongmen destabilising the countryside led the international community to gradually confront former Northern Alliance leaders throughout 2002 and 2003. Foreign donors, ISAF and the UN especially, feared that these men and their militias could disrupt the Afghan presidential elections in 2004. The U.S. government, which had been distracted by the push towards war in Iraq, also wanted to show progress in Afghanistan ahead of U.S. presidential elections that same year. Meeting with diplomats and UN and ISAF officials in August 2003 to discuss the continued presence of Fahim's militia in Kabul, the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) and Deputy Head of the UN's Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA), Jean Arnault, stated that the demilitarisation of the main population centers by June 2004 was 'a necessary condition for the holding of free and fair elections'.[155]

The 2003 debate on the reform of the security sector 'dragged on for several months'.[156] Fahim's group, which also included Deputy Defense Minister Atiqullah Baryalai and Army Chief of Staff Bismullah Khan, proposed a 200,000 to 250,000 men army including 'demobilised, reorganized, retrained and winnowed-down' AMF

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153 UN, "Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-establishment of Permanent Government Institutions," United Nations, December 5, 2001, or 'Bonn Agreement'. Avalaible at http://www.un.org/News/dh/latest/afghan/afghan-agree.htm (accessed 17 June 2014). The final text read: 'Upon the official transfer of power, all mujahidin, Afghan armed forces and armed groups in the country shall come under the command and control of the Interim Authority, and be reorganized according to the requirements of the new Afghan security and armed forces'. The agreement also contained a pledge by the conference's participants 'to withdraw all military units from Kabul and other urban centers or other areas in which the UN mandated force is deployed'. The agreement also urged the UN and the international community 'in recognition of the heroic role played by the mujahidin in protecting the independence of Afghanistan and the dignity of the people' in coordination with the Interim Authority 'to assist in the reintegration of the mujahidin into the new Afghan security and armed forces'.

154 Rubin, "Identifying Options," 39, 40.

155 As quoted in UN Code Cable on "DDR in Kabul". See also Suhrke, *When More is Less*, 76. 558.

156 Giustozzi, "Military Reform," 26.

units.[157] The Ministry of Defense would be in charge of the DDR process. 'My suggestion was that any suitable mujahedeen could go into the ANA and the ANP', said a high-ranking Shura-ye Nazar and Defense official at the time.[158] As Rubin noted, this model would have meant the Panjshiris retainining their power and having it further legitimised by the international community's support for the DDR programme and the ANA, which they would control.[159]

Initially Fahim's faction had some success in seizing control over the DDR process. In January 2003 President Karzai appointed four Defense Commissions, including a National Disarmament Commission headed by Baryalai. The year before he had already launched a weapon collection and registration programme targeting the AMF in five northern provinces (Badakhshan, Takhar, Kunduz, Parwan, Kapisa), though it was not clear how many weapons were collected and in whose hands they ended up. The problem was that although many militia commanders and fighters were tired of fighting, and seemed interested in reintegration opportunities in civilian society, they were reluctant to disarm with the security ministries in the hands of a single faction, Shura-e-Nazar. The weapons collection had stopped when it had become clear the Shura-e Nazar faction 'would control Kabul and the central army'.[160]

On the other side of the debate sat a westernised faction of the Afghan government, which included Finance Minister (and future President) Ashraf Ghani and Interior Minister Ali Jalali and members of UNAMA, the government of Japan (that became the 'lead nation' on DDR as explained below) and the U.S. governments. This group, though lacking a single alternative proposal (on the international side there were

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157 Rubin, "Identifying Options," 41. See also Giustozzi, "Military Reform," 26.
158 428.
159 Rubin, "Identifying Options".
160 Rubin, "Identifying Options", 43. See also Bhatia and Sedra, *Afghanistan, Arms and Conflict*, 120-122; 428. There seemed to be widespread support for disarmament among the broader population in Afghanistan in 2003. In a 2003 survey participants prioritised disarmament as the most important thing to do to improve security. They thought that without disarmament it would be "extremely difficult" to hold free and fair elections and to make progress with reconstruction. "Speaking Out: Afghan Opinions on Rights and Responsibilities," *The Human Rights Research and Advocacy Consortium*, November 19, 2003. See also "Take the Guns Away, Afghan Voices on Security and Elections," *The Human Rights Research and Advocacy Consortium*, September, 2004.

differences of opinion between UNAMA, the Japanese and U.S. governments on how to proceed, though the U.S. view generally won), favoured of a 60,000 men strong army made up of new recruits, untainted by factional allegiances.[161] The AMF would be demobilised, with a small percentage, 10 to 15 per cent, allowed into the new army.[162] In addition, Japan, the UN, and later the U.S. envisaged reforming the Defense Ministry, with the ultimate aim of removing Fahim.[163] The first UN-led DDR programme thus became an attempt to push back against the influence of former Northern Alliance powerbrokers, particularly Fahim, paving the way for a new army, and also securing the Afghan presidential elections, scheduled for 2004.[164]

The DDR concept, as the international community had promoted it in peacekeeping and state building operations around the world, provided neutral language for these politically controversial goals. Indeed, in a 2003 meeting of foreign diplomats in Kabul, UN Deputy SRSG Jean Arnault said that disarmament 'be discussed within the framework of state-building rather than "defactionalisation", an approach that was likely to provoke a negative reaction' among the Panjshiris, according to a UN cable to New York headquarters.[165] However, while state building language was used because it sounded more neutral, the first UN-led DDR programme nonetheless seemed less about long-term goals like establishing the state's monopoly on the use of force and more about short-term political expediency, namely securing the elections.

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161 Rubin, "Identifying Options", (42); Giustozzi, "Military Reform"; ICG, "Force in Fragments". The U.S. government, as the main overall donor in Afghanistan dominated the direction of DDR, even if it was financially and politically not greatly invested in the programme. The cap on the number of DDR participants in the new ANA (which senior DDR officials thought was a bad idea) was one such example. Another was the rejection of the Japanese government's proposal to focus on reintegrating former combatants rather than disarming them – discussed below. 512; 547.

162 Initially the plan was that no-one would be admitted into the ANA, but that was adjusted later. Giustozzi, "Military Reform", 27.

163 Rubin, "Identifying Options", 41, 42. The reform of the Ministry of Defense caused a four months delay and eventually the donors wanted to move ahead with implementing the programme, even though the reform had not been completed. Michael Bhatia, Emile LeBrun, Robert Muggah, Mark Sedra, "DDR in Afghanistan when state-building and insecurity collide" in *Small Arms Survey 2009: Shadows of War*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 294.

164 Rubin, "Identifying Options", 42, Giustozzi, "Military Reform".

165 UNAMA, "DDR in Kabul" cable.

This led to two main problems. First, DDR became in effect a stand-alone programme because the other elements of the state building agenda were not in place – most importantly a new army and police force. There was a general state-building framework for Afghanistan had been developed by 2003. During conferences in Tokyo, Geneva and Petersburg through 2002 international policymakers had agreed a broad SSR package. It included DDR, police training, army training, counter narcotics and justice. Lead nations would take responsibility for each component: the U.S. for training a new army, Germany for the police, Italy for justice and the UK for counter narcotics. Japan became the responsible nation for DDR.

In a series of international meetings and conferences and behind-the-scene negotiations the UN and the U.S. donors used this framework to wrestle the control over the DDR process from Fahim and his men and set the agenda for reform of the security sector; helped by the fact that no donor funding would be available for Baryalai's DDR plans.[166] But by 2003 there has been little progress on the other elements of the security sector reform agenda, which in the UN state building concept were seen as closely linked. A 'variety of sometimes contradictory' counter-narcotics approaches had failed to stem the major increase in opium production, which bolstered AMF commanders' wealth and influence.[167] Italian-led judicial reform, crucial to tackling the culture of impunity that benefitted militia commanders, suffered from 'weak leadership and lack of attention within the government, UNAMA and the donor community' and was 'drifting rudderless'.[168]

Afghanistan's security sector had collapsed and faced a shortage of resources and human capacity. During decades of war ministries had fallen prey to the patronage of

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166 DDR had become a standard element of international peace building in countries after war. It had even grown into 'an industry', as one interviewee who worked as an analyst in Afghanistan at the time said, with practitioners travelling around the world disarming ex-combatants. Therefore there was ample donor funding available for a conventional DDR programme.514; Rubin, "Identifying Options", 42.

167 Mark Sedra, "Security Sector Transformation in Afghanistan" (paper presented at a conference at the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, 2003). See also Michael Bhatia, Kevin Lanigan, Philip Wilkinson, "Minimal Investment, Minimal Results: The Failure of Security Policy in Afghanistan," *Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*, June 2004, 8,17.

168 Bhatia et al., "Minimal Investment", page 18. See also Sedra, "Security Sector", 11, 12.

those in charge at any given time. While the ANA was being built from scratch the police service was not, and included many ethnic-based factional militias. A formerly high-ranking MoI official said: 'The international community did not invest in good police. Germany had a limited amount of money and the U.S. was not interested in nation building but only in counter terrorism so it only started paying attention to the police after a few years'.[169]

A senior former DDR official said:

> At times there was a lack of cohesiveness in the overall strategic direction. The supporting nations had different objectives. To give each country [one particular area to work on] was not helpful. I don't think Italians produced one law; there was lots of talking but no action. The Germans sent a dozen police men oversees to study law, while what country needed was 100,000 police. The UK was in Mazar-e Sharif [it established a Provincial Reconstruction Team or PRT[170] there as part of the ISAF expansion], and saw that counter narcotics was in Helmand, and got sucked into COIN [counterinsurgency] there. Nations didn't get it together.[171]

Even the expedient, short-term training of troops and police progressed more slowly than planned. The original aim was to train 18,000 troops by October 2003, but by mid-2004 that number was still not reached. Rubin wrote at the time: 'The idea of supplying security through the ANA and the new Afghan police is an excellent one, if one is prepared to wait five to ten years'.[172] Thus, when the international community started to discuss seriously the disarmament of the AMF in 2003, the UN had only just mandated ISAF to expand its presence and no viable alternative Afghan security forces could provide security in place of warlords.

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[169] 414; Sedra, "Security Sector", 1; ICG, "Force in Fragments"; Giustozzi, Antonio and Isaqzadeh, Mohammad. 2011. "Afghanistan's Paramilitary Policing in Context, The Risks of Expediency." Thematic Report, (Kabul: Afghanistan Analysts Network, 2011), 2; Sedra, "Security Sector", 1, 6; Bhatia et al., "Minimal Investment", 17.
[170] Provincial Reconstruction Teams, that combined military and civilian organisations, had three core tasks: improve security; extend the reach of the Afghan government and development and reconstruction. Overview of the UK's work in Afghanistan on https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uks-work-in-afghanistan/the-uks-work-in-afghanistan (accessed 15 October 2015).
[171] 547.
[172] Rubin, "Identifying Options", 43; Sedra, "Security Sector", 1-4.

Planning still went ahead. The UN would lead the first DDR programme on behalf of the Afghan government, with the Afghanistan New Beginnings Programme (ANBP) -- costing almost $150 million, mainly paid by Japan – created for this purpose at the Tokyo Conference in April 2003. 'There was a lot of pressure to get things moving, from everyone; UNAMA pressured UNDP [United Nations Development Programme] and donors were pressuring the UN', said a former UN official. Doubts about the army and police being unpreprared to provide security were put aside, he said. 'We were going before the rest of SSR. In mid-2003 we were advising Brahimi not to launch DDR in October. The other SSR pillars should have matured, so that the ANP and the ANA would have prevented a security vacuum from occurring'.[173]

The ANBP was initially headed by UN official Sultan Aziz, who was replaced at a later stage by retired British army officer Peter Babbington, who had been involved in DDR in Sierra Leone. The DDR programme that was eventually decided upon only targeted members of the AMF. Its two overarching goals were '(1) to break the historic patriarchal chain of command existing between the former commanders and their men; and (2) to provide the demobilised personnel with the ability to become economically independent - the ultimate objective being to reinforce the authority of the government'.[174] Analysts wrote at the time:

> The basic objective is to break the power of the second and third level commanders by reintegrating their soldiers into the civilian economy and giving them something better to do. By providing reintegration benefits and alternative livelihoods through its reintegration programs, the commanders' ability to mobilise their militias through the provision of economic incentives is expected to be reduced.[175]

Another problem with using the state building framework to legitimise and finance an attempt to reverse former Northern Alliance commanders' influence was that this effort was forced into the mould of a conventional DDR programme, as it had been

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[173] 512.
[174] As stated on the official ANBP website from the UNDP: http://www.anbp.af.undp.org/homepage/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2&Itemid=3 (accessed 8 June 2012).
[175] Bhatia et al., "Minimal Investment," 16.

developed by the UN over the years; a concept that did not fit well with Afghan traditions in dealing with militias and with the post-2001 political realities.

The design of the first Afghan DDR programme thus mostly followed the sequential UN template; disarmament followed by demobilisation followed by reintegration. It also focused primarily on the first two elements, in spite of main donor Japan's policy interest in the reintegration phase, in particular human security and 'bottom-up' development and dialogue.[176] The Defense Ministry would select individuals and units for participation in the ANBP. These individuals would then be vetted by Regional Verification Committees, consisting of one government official, one ANBP official and three to five village elders.

While in other countries disarmament took place in camp-like settings, Afghanistan's geography made this unrealistic. Instead, former combatants would hand in weapons in mobile disarmament units, then the subsequent day go to ANBP regional offices for demobilisation. Ex-combatants were provided with clothes and sacks of rice or flour and cooking oil. Initially the reinsertion package included money ($200) but this led to problems as commanders forced participants to hand over their cash.

The participant was also presented with employment and educational options, and advised to come back in a fortnight to select one of the reintegration packages on offer.[177] The reintegration element was copied from elsewhere, according to the former DDR official. 'We analysed the type of reintegration programmes established elsewhere and their success rates. All reintegration programmes we looked at were in Africa'. According him the designers of the programme were 'learning and developing' as they went along. 'We didn't know what the end product would be. But

[176] The Japanese government, thinking that 'the security environment was not conducive for disarmament', proposed dropping the disarmament component and focusing on reintegration. However, the Japanese eventually accepted the U.S. position that disarmament had to come first 'because they wanted to be part of the War on Terror. Rossi and Giustozzi, page 5. Bhatia and Sedra, page 131; 547; Dennis T. Yasumoto, *Japan's Civil-Military Diplomacy: The Banks of the Rubicon*, (New York/Abingdon: Routledge, 2014) page 42.
[177] 500; 512; 513; 514. See Bhatia and Sedra, 2008, 127.

we did research into previous DDR literature and lessons learned. Of course the UN was institutionally well aware of DDR'.[178]

That DDR in Afghanistan was mostly copied from elsewhere was problematic for several reasons. First, the DDR template informing donors support to African post-conflict disarmament efforts was already flawed. As Sabiiti Mutengesa argues, DDR is an instance of 'doctrinal stretching', 'i.e., the creation of distortions by applying an aspect of doctrine developed in a specific historical and organizational set-up to new contexts'. The DDR recipe as bilateral and multilateral donors have promoted it in countries emerging from civil war in Latin America, Africa and Asia has been taken from western experiences of war between states. In that context mobilisation meant bringing 'skeletal units and combat formations from peace time to wartime strength' and demobilisation 'the release of skilled individuals from service on the basis of the needs of the industry'. This had little to do with mobilisation and demobilisation in the context of civil wars, in which fighters may be mobilised along ethnic or tribal lines to fight their countrymen, and may be forcibly recruited, in some cases abducted.[179]

Second, 'lessons learned' from the African DDR programmes may not have been necessarily the right ones. The Ugandan DDR process, which took place from 1992 until 1996, was relatively successful precisely because it deviated from the conventional approach. But this was not sufficiently acknowledged as a lesson learned, according to Mutengesa.[180] DDR in Mozambique was seen as a major

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[178] 512.

[179] Sabiiti Mutengesa, "Facile Acronyms and Tangled Processes: A Re-Examination of the 1990s 'DDR' in Uganda," *International Peacekeeping*, 20:3 (2013), 338-356.

[180] He points out that analysts' and practitioners' generally look at the 1992-1995 period in Uganda when the government proceeded with a massive discharge of soldiers from the army. This meant that less attention was paid to the measures taken right after a new government had been formed in 1986 after a military victory. In spite of donors pushing for quick demobilisation in 1986 the new government took an inclusionary approach and integrated soldiers from the old and defeated army into the new official security forces. According to Mutensega the government approach, which 'remained the NRM's primary avenue of managing armed groups', worked better in creating stability than immediate demobilisation. Those who were being reintegrated expressed commitment to the new government by submitting fighters and equipment to the command and control of the government's army. At the time 'for the politico-military groups jostling for power throughout the early 1980s, co-optation

success in UN circles around the time the first DDR programme in Afghanistan was designed, as in the years following the 1992 deal between the government and opposition that ended the war peace was firmly established. However, according to analysts, the short-term minimalist approach to reintegration that was adopted in Mozambique (aimed at 'removing former fighters as an immediate threat to peace' instead of aimed at 'finding jobs for the demobilized through training and credit projects'), which had been decided on after a fierce debate among donors, the UN and agencies and which the UN Secretary-General had hailed as a success, did not prevent severe long-term security and socio-economic challenges. Therefore Mozambique, like other African countries, including the Central African Republic, Republic of Congo, Liberia and Zimbabwe, had to repeat reintegration efforts. This was exactly the sort of help that was originally proposed by those advocating a long-term view to reintegration.[181]

Third, vast differences existed between armed groups in Africa and those in Afghanistan (in terms of goals, organisation, membership and so forth). Equally the political, military, economical and social environments in which they operated differed enormously. What worked in one place would not necessarily work elsewhere.

For example the RUF (Revolutionary United Front) insurgency in Sierra Leone, which was 'far less a political movement with a definite goal as it was an environment facilitating modes of behaviour perceived as beneficial by combatants', included many rebel fighters who joined up 'not through some cost-benefit analysis but through direct abduction into RUF ranks'.[182] The Sierra Leonean DDR programme ran from September 1998 to January 2002, and UN officials in Kabul studied it, along

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and integration of their military wings was the principal reassurance that the new government respected their interests'. Mutengesa, "Facile Acronyms," 338-356.

[181] Jaremey McMullin, "Reintegration of Combatants: Were the Right Lessons Learned in Mozambique?," *International Peacekeeping*, 11: 4 (2004): 627-633, 639; Nelson Alusala and Dominique Dye, "Reintegration in Mozambique; an unresolved affair," *Institute for Security Studies*, 2010, 1, 6-9.

[182] Kieran Mitton, "Engaging with disengagement. The political reintegration of Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front" *in Reintegrating Armed Groups After Conflict, Politics, violence and transition*, ed. Mats Berdal and David H. Ucko. (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 174.

with other demobilisation processes in Africa, when they designed the first DDR programme for Afghanistan. Some Japanese officials involved in the first DDR programme in Afghanistan had also worked on DDR in Sierra Leone. But critical differences existed in the nature of armed groups. In Afghanistan abduction was not a common recruitment tool. Moreover, ex-combatants had often kept ties to the communities they originated from. Many even fought part-time, returning to help their families harvest. They were not alienated from their communities, and thus required a different approach than for ex-combatants in Sierra Leone.

Cash handouts to ex-combatants, which worked in Mozambique, were also tried in Afghanistan in the pilot phase of the first DDR programme in 2003. However, this approach did not account for the continued influence commanders enjoyed over their fighters. Not only did they usually know their fighters from their time on the battlefield, but many also hailed from the same village, belonged to the same sub-tribe or even the same family. In Kunduz, where the DDR programme started, commanders simply claimed the cash handouts and the lower-rank fighters were left with nothing. Handouts, which the UN had seen as key to the perceived success of DDR in Mozambique and an element to be replicated elsewhere, had to be phased out in Afghanistan.

Last, DDR templates as they had been developed in African countries were also limited relevance to Afghanistan because of different political contexts. In 1996 Mats Berdal situated DDR efforts since 1989 in three different categories. Most large-scale efforts by that time, like those in Namibia, Cambodia, Mozambique and El Salvador, had been part of 'comprehensive political settlements', agreed and negotiated under internal auspices after years of inconclusive fighting between guerrilla and government forces. By contrast in Uganda, Ethiopia and Eritrea 'responsibility for demobilization and military reform had been assumed by governments victorious in civil war or otherwise not under direct military threat'. The final category covered a limited number of cases where external actors had engaged in coercive disarmament after political settlement proved elusive – like the UN's disarmament effort in Somalia in 1993.[183]

[183] Mats Berdal, "The Context," *The Adelphi Papers* 36:303 (2008): 59–72.

In Afghanistan DDR was not part of a peace agreement, as members of the former regime did not participate in the Bonn Conference and did not sign the eventual agreement. Instead, it was a military victory of one side of the war. But in contrast to the African cases where one side had won, the victory in Afghanistan had been achieved primarily because of the help of a U.S.-led coalition; a coalition that exerted great influence over the new political order, which excluded the Taliban, and continued a military campaign against them. By contrast, in Uganda, where DDR was considered to be relatively successful, the new government integrated soldiers of the former regime into its army.

Afghanistan lacked the 'preconditions' for successful DDR described later by the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations: a negotiated peace deal that provides a legal framework for DDR, trust in the peace process, willingness of the parties to the conflict to disarm and minimum security guarantees.[184] Another 2010 UN report mentions that if traditional DDR is initiated in a setting that lacks these preconditions its impact could be adverse – following on widespread criticisms of analysts and observers arguing this point. It mentions (but does not elaborate on) alternative strategies, including changing the sequence from DDR to RDD, so starting with reintegration. Only later would they be demobilised and disarmed, with command structures initially kept intact.[185]

Shura-ye Nazar leaders proposed some similar adjustments to the DDR programme in Afghanistan – largely to protect their own interests – but these were rejected. MoD Chief of Staff Bismullah Khan proposed that the reintegration phase take place before disarmament and demobilisation. He also proposed to include in the programme 'mujaheds' who were not part of the AMF and giving ex-combatants $50 a month until they found a job, rather than a one-off payment of $200. Fahim's Deputy Minister Baryalai on several occasions proposed keeping a residual army of 30,000

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[184] UN, "Second Generation Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) Practices in Peace Operations," Report commissioned by United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, February 2010, 4, 8.
[185] UN, "Second Generation Disarmament," 28.

men. Donors rejected all these proposals. Although DDR was already done through a 'salami-slicing' method, gradually downsizing many units instead of simply decommissioning them, MoD officials also tried to convince the donor community that DDR should be done more the 'Afghan way', meaning even more emphasis on downsizing.[186]

UN officials negotiated with Fahim and his men behind closed doors on which commander should demobilise when and with how many men. The numbers MoD officials quoted were more or less fictitious, as most commanders and fighters had self-demobilised after the Taliban regime was ousted in 2001. The MoD payroll was hugely inflated with 'ghost soldiers', who only existed on paper. Officials claimed 'outrageous figures' of up to 230,000 AMF, according to a former high-level DDR official.[187] The MoD and the UN settled on 100,000 AMF for the DDR programme, which was later downsized to 50,000.[188] The DDR programme was about buying off the sense of entitlement of the top leadership, according to analysts.[189] 'Fahim didn't have too much of a choice than to go along with DDR because ISAF was there. He agreed grudgingly because he stood to lose money. There were allegations that he was paid off, but those were not confirmed'.[190]

The fact that DDR was mainly aimed at one political-military group was clearly visible in its implementation and was keenly felt by Panjshiris. First, it targeted only the AMF. The strategic implications of that were obvious, particularly to the Shura-ye Nazar faction, which dominated the AMF, and its allied commanders across the

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186 Afghan New Beginnings Programme, "Weekly Summary Report, 4-10 January 2004" (unpublished); Letter from Bismullah Khan, on behalf of the Ministry of Defense, to President Karzai, cabinet members and foreign diplomats, August 9, 2004 (unpublished); Minutes of a Special National Security Council Security Sector Reform meeting on May 15, 2004 (unpublished); United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, "Daily Report nr. 174 of 6 November 2003," (unpublished); United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, "Daily Report nr. 173 of 6 November 2003", (unpublished).

187 512.

188 Caroline Hartzell, "Missed Opportunities; the Impact of DDR on SSR in Afghanistan", *Special Report*, (Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 2011), 4.

189 Michael Semple; 514; Caroline Hartzell, "Missed Opportunities; the Impact of DDR on SSR in Afghanistan," *United States Institute of Peace*, 2011, 4.

190 514.

country. Non-AMF militias would remain armed (including private armed groups from factional leaders and militias employed by the coalition forces to fight the Taliban, particularly in the south), as would the thousands of Talibs who had fled the country with their weapons.

Second, DDR mostly targeted former Northern Alliance commanders in the northern and western heartland. In the south, U.S-led coalition forces were hunting Taliban and al-Qaeda. Without official Afghan security forces, they relied on AMF militias for combat operations and to secure military bases, and opposed including these militias in DDR. 'The Americans refused to let us do DDR in southern Afghanistan in the first year and a half', said Babbington. 'That created suspicion among the Tajiks that the U.S. was supporting the Pashtuns'.[191] A high-ranking Shura-ye Nazar member confirms:

> The constitution praised the mujahedeen but in reality it was insulting them by taking their weapons. It was a zero-sum game for the mujahedeen. They thought they were the targets of this process. A small minority were prepared to give up their weapons. But the majority did not want to do it at all, or said that they would only submit their weapons if they could get a government position. My suggestion was to reintegrate any suitable mujahedeen in the ANA and ANP. Those who are not capable for the army should join the civil sector. Other people should be paid, an amount consummate with their rank.[192]

Third, as DDR was meant to pave the way for a new army, with recruits untainted with past factional affiliations, there were few reintegration opportunities in the ANA for the AMF commanders. This would have been the most logical route for many of them, as they had little work experience off the battlefield. U.S. general Karl Eikenberry, responsible for SSR and aiming to build a new army, insisted on a 10 per cent cap on DDR participants entering the ANA.[193]

Former ANBP officials say this was a 'strategic mistake'.[194] One said: 'We proposed to mix them up. Take a person from Kunduz and send him to Jalalabad, for example.

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[191] 547.
[192] 428.
[193] DDR process as described on the website of the Afghanistan New Beginnings Programme www.anbp.af.undp.org (accessed 8 June 2012); 512.
[194] 547; 512.

Of course you need to justify the size of the army, but I thought already at the time that the target number of 70,000 was naïve. We had our first suicide bombing in 2003; the writing was on the wall'.[195] A former senior DDR official said: 'They [the Americans] were not in Afghanistan [to make it a] democratic country. The initial reason was the War on Terror'.[196]

This lack of reintegration opportunities in the new ANA was compounded by the overall insufficient attention to reintegration. Afghan factional leaders pushed for more reintegration incentives but donors and the ANBP, which was managed by ex-military figures, focused more on disarmament and demobilisation. 'When the programme was set up we were very focused on preparing the groundwork for disarmament and demobilisation, at the expense of reintegration', said a former senior DDR official. 'In hindsight we should have focused much more on reintegration before disarmament and demobilisation'.[197]

A former high-ranking government official, who, for the PDPA regime, had been involved in Dr. Najibullah's National Reconciliation Programme, said it was a major mistake to not offer more reintegration options:

> They should have given the mujahedeen money and a position. The government should have made a course for them to study how to be good government officials. We needed those people. But they never thought about the dignity of these people.[198]

In sum, AMF commanders were asked to give up their weapons without guarantees that they would be safe and while rivals remained armed. They were offered the same reintegration opportunities (farming, small businesses etc.) as their fighters, which angered many commanders. In October 2004 the Commander Incentive Program was introduced, providing financial incentives and training opportunities for senior

[195] 512.
[196] 547.
[197] 512.
[198] 424.

commanders. But this measure still left out the many lower level commanders, who still faced the same options as the rank and file.[199]

A former DDR official who had to negotiate with commanders on their disarmament remembers that they were 'very unhappy':

> I think it was because we were developing the programme on the fly. There were no packages for commanders. Karzai would tell them I will make you governor or police chief, but they couldn't be sure of that. We also flew some commanders to Malaysia [for training]. We were desperate to get their good will, and if that meant taking them to a nice hotel in Malaysia that was fine as far as we were concerned. But even at an early stage we knew it would be complicated. We were coming in promising change, and the commanders, who had been fighting for decades, were more cynical and in retrospect more realistic. They were extremely difficult.[200]

The unfavourable conditions of the DDR programme motivated commanders to keep as many weapons and men as they could. The most powerful among them could manipulate the process because of the limited knowledge within the UN on their militias and command and control structures. 'It was about figuring out who was who and what they needed', said a former analyst. 'But the UN didn't have that level of intelligence. It had no idea of command structures'.[201]

Commanders therefore 'controlled more or less' who to put forward and which weapons to hand in. 'We were continuously negotiating with commanders', said a former DDR official who travelled around the countryside, supposedly disarming commanders.[202] But they only allowed the disarmament of weak or rival sub-commanders, and kept their best men armed, according to the same official and former colleagues. DDR officials 'took whatever they brought in', confirmed another former DDR official. 'This was a great weakness of DDR. People received benefits on the basis of the junk they had retrieved from their grandfather's backyard'.[203]

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[199] Christian Dennys, "Disarmament, Demobilization and Rearmament?," Japan NGO Network, June 6, 2005, 3, 7.
[200] 519.
[201] 514.
[202] 511.
[203] 512.

According to official figures, as the programme ended in July 2005, 63,380 ex-combatants had been demobilised and 55,054 of them received reintegration benefits.[204] Analyst Caroline Hartzell estimates that 80 per cent of them were, however, 'members of self-defense groups selected to participate in the process by commanders who sought to retain control of seasoned troops'.[205] DDR could not break the link between mid-level commanders and their men – its primary goal. Often it even reinforced patron-client relations between commanders and their men.[206]

The case studies below show that permanently separating commanders from fighters was always going to be complicated in Afghanistan, where bonds between commanders and their men – usually from the same family or sub-tribe or who lived in the same village – usually preceded their shared battlefield experience. That said, many commanders and fighters were tired of fighting. Many seemed at least open to the possibility of reintegration into civilian life.

The unfavourable conditions of the first DDR programme (the targeting of only one group in an insecure environment; the sequencing of disarmament and demobilisation before reintegration and the lack of attractive reintegration opportunities) meant, however, that most commanders actively resisted disarmament and made sure to retain ties to their former fighters. Most sought to obtain government positions

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[204] ANBP website, http://www.anbp.af.undp.org (accessed 8 June 2012). Under the DDR programme 57,629 light and medium weapons were also collected. More successful than DDR in terms of collecting weapons was the Heavy Weapons Collection programme, which was formally launched by presidential decree on 27 March 2004 as part of the ANBP. At the time, a national survey estimated some 5,606 heavy weapons to be in circulation. But when the programme ended in June 2006, 12,248 heavy weapons had been collected and cantoned. There are, however, two qualifications to this success, according to Mark Sedra. First, the initial survey was limited. Second, commanders had realised that the international military presence had made heavy weapons redundant. Next to the Heavy Weapons Collection programme efforts were also made to destroy stockpiles of ammunition, through the Anti-Personnel Mines and Ammunition Stockpile Destruction project. Sedra, "Afghanistan and the Folly," 485-486; Bhatia and Sedra, *Afghanistan, Arms*, 129, 133, 134, 114.
[205] Hartzell, "Missed Opportunities," 9.
[206] Hartzell, "Missed Opportunities," 8; Barbara Stapleton, "Disarming the Militias" (paper presented at conference of the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan Conference, 2009), republished by the Afghanistan Analysts Network in 2013. http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/20130428BS-Disarming_the_Militias_w_Preface_FINAL.pdf (accessed 14 February 2014).

through patronage – which often meant taking their followers with them – rather than through DDR procedures, which would have favoured individual reintegration. As a result the first DDR programme increased the factionalisation of the government.

The commanders who were most successful in obtaining sought-after government positions were those with good connections in the Karzai government (mostly those at the senior – regional and provincial – level). Many of these former AMF commanders ended up in the ANP. But because this happened through personal connections rather than the DDR programme, they did not reintegrate individually but with their militias, with command structures still intact. A former high-ranking MoI official said:

> The problem with DDR was that the government accepted the warlords. The wartime political structures were not destroyed. They only allowed 10 per cent into the army, but they did not stop them from entering the police. So they all became police.[207]

This undermined DDR's priority of breaking the ties between commanders and their fighters and increased factionalisation of the government, undermining its legitimacy in the eyes of Afghans. 'DDR was a joke. The commanders just took their fighters into the police, but they were not under control of the MoI', said former USAID official Richard Scarth. 'Divisions slipped into MoI'.[208] 'The government gave the bad guys to the MoI', confirms a former high-level MoI official.[209]

> There were differences among the international community and the Afghan government. One group [President Karzai and U.S. Ambassador Khalilzad] wanted stability first and the other ones [the westernised faction of the Karzai government, which at that time included MoI minister Jalali] wanted the rule of law first. But the last group was sidelined. We compromised for short-term stability and we can see the consequences in the long run, the bad rule of law, the instability.

There were also many AMF commanders who were unable to obtain a government position because they lacked good connections in Kabul. The case studies indicate that especially mid-level and low-level commanders struggled to find a new place in the post-Taliban order. Their non-AMF rivals remained armed so they also sought to

[207] 426.
[208] 558.
[209] 414.

remain armed. Moreover, while most foot soldiers had self-demobilised after 2001 and had gone home to a life of farming, the commanders' careers had been made on the battlefield.[210] As a high-ranking member of one of the former Northern Alliance parties said:

> Before DDR the political command of the former jihadi parties was the same as the military command. That changed; the chain of command shifted to the political as they transitioned from military-political organisations into political-military organisations. Mid-level and low-level commanders were in a vacuum. Before DDR they had been authorities with bodyguards. Overnight they became Mr. Nobodies.[211]

Some commanders in the south rearmed as Afghan Security Guards, which were militias working with SOF to secure bases and assist in combat. Other commanders who lost out through DDR started operating against the government, with some joining the insurgency – examples run throughout the case studies. This development contributed significantly to rising insecurity in Afghanistan after 2004, at about the time when the Taliban was reorganising in Pakistan; a factor that so far received scant attention in analysis of Afghanistan's destabilisation.

This meant that not only did the DDR programme increase the factionalisation of the government, but it also deepened the political exclusion that was the main driver of the insurgency, other violence and of increasing militarisation. 'For three years (after the Bonn Conference) we had everything, there was peace and security', said Fahim, who died in March 2014, in a 2008 interview. 'When Karzai tried to make his own government and ousted the mujahedeen [this led to] insecurity. Now there is fighting

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[210] For the vast majority of former foot soldiers, however, it was difficult to make ends meet, as reintegration packages were not informed by the Afghan labour market. For the problems with the reintegration of the rank and file see Bhatia, Small Arms Survey 2009, 294; Antonio Giustiozzi, "Bureaucratic Façade and Political Realities of Disarmament and Demobilisation," *Conflict, Security & Development*, 8:2, (2008): 174; Antonio Giustozzi and Simonetta Rossi, "Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants (DDR) in Afghanistan: Constraints and Limited Capabilities," *Crisis States Research Centre, London School of Economics and Political Sciences*, 2006; Patricia Gossman, "Transitional Justice and DDR: The Case of Afghanistan," *International Center for Transitional Justice*, 2009.

[211] 427.

everywhere'.[212] Another high-ranking Shura-ye Nazar member was more direct: 'The generation that fought against the communists started fighting against the government'.[213]

Overall, therefore, although DDR was part of the conventional international state building agenda that was pursued in Afghanistan after 2001, at least according to statements of foreign officials, the first DDR programme was only initiated when foreign powers and the UN wanted to reverse the political and military influence of one faction. Northern Alliance commanders had helped oust the Taliban regime, but had afterwards become a liability, especially in the run-up to the 2004 presidential elections that many diplomats hoped interim president Hamid Karzai, a Pashtun from the south seen as a firm ally of the West, would win.

To provide cover and funding to this push back against former Northern Alliance leaders, particularly those of the Shura-ye Nazar faction, the international community used the language and practice of state building. The fact that a state building framework was already in place helped facilitate this. 'Lead-nations' had so far, however, not delivered on the promises made in the framework. This situation presented two problems for the first internationally funded attempt to disarm, demobilise and reintegrate militia commanders and fighters. First, the DDR programme was based on a UN template ill-suited to Afghan traditions in dealing with militias and to the post-2001 political reality. Second, the programme started before other state building elements were in place, most importantly a significantly sized army and police.

The initiation of DDR as a stand-alone programme reflected the fact that the U.S. was in Afghanistan in the first place to pursue a military campaign against the Taliban rather than rebuild the state. In this context, the first DDR programme deepened the pattern of political exclusion by cutting armed commanders loose from the government. Only the most powerful were able to obtain positions in the ANSF or

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[212] Deedee Derksen, "The Politics of Disarmament and Rearmament in Afghanistan," *United States Institute of Peace*, May 2015, 11.
[213] 428.

local administrations. The programme succeeding DDR aiming to disband illegal militias (DIAG) ended up repeating this pattern, as the next section of this chapter shows. Both programmes undermined the project of building a stronger state in Afghanistan, of which they were supposed to be part, by contributing to the government's factionalisation and to growing violence and insurgency.

2.2. Disbanding Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG)

In December 2004 the top American commander in Afghanistan, Lt. Gen. David W. Barno, overseeing 17,000 coalition troops, argued three wars were raging: the hunt for Taliban and al-Qaeda leaders; the campaign against Taliban and al-Qaeda networks; and the battle against provincial warlords, drugs traffickers and other 'centrifugal forces'.[214] This last group included former AMF commanders who had been able to keep their now illegal militia intact despite the first DDR programme. The UN wrote: 'The groups supporting illegal weapons ownership perpetuate the drug industry, impose illegal taxes on individuals in reconstruction projects and impede the progress of state expansion'.[215]

The initiative for a programme targeting 'illegal militias' (the term 'illegal armed groups', IAGs, was adopted later) appears to have come from the westernised faction of the Karzai administration, which included former Communication Minister Mohammad Masoom Stanekzai and Minister of Interior Ali Ahmad Jalali. Presidential Decree 50 from July 2004 defined all groups outside the AMF as illegal and called for their disbandment. A planning cell within the ANBP identified in 2005 1,870 illegal militias, with around 129,000 men and some 336,000 small arms and light weapons. The problem was probably graver. An internal ISAF document on DIAG estimated there were 4 to 6 million small arms in Afghanistan.[216] A later internal DIAG study listed 3,200 commanders, each with between five and 300 men.

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[214] Eric Schmitt, "Afghans' Gains Face Big Threat in Drug Traffic," *New York Times*, December 10, 2004.
[215] UN, "Operational Guide to the Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS)," (New York: United Nations, 2006), 13.
[216] International Security Assistance Force, "Concept of Operations" dated March 16, 2005 (unpublished).

The DIAG programme was more Afghan-owned than the internationally-driven DDR. The Disarmament and Reintegration Commission (including representatives of the relevant ministries, foreign donors, the UN, the European Union (EU), ISAF and the coalition forces, chaired by then-Vice-President Mohammad Karim Khalili) assumed 'the dual role of DIAG steering committee and high-level policy lead for the process, giving it strategic direction and coordinating the various actors engaged in it at the political level'. The Joint Secretariat (JS), including representatives from security institutions, UNAMA and ISAF, and DIAG provincial committees (chaired by the governor, and with provincial representatives from relevant ministries) were principally responsible for implementation. The blueprint was flexible, allowing for regionally-specific implementation.[217]

In its first five years, the programme received more than $36 million – again Japan paid for much of it.[218] Publicly, the UNDP – involved through its management of the ANBP – stated that DIAG aimed to be more than a nationwide weapons collection. It aimed to rid the country of parallel-armed structures. 'Its ultimate objective is to allow the re-establishment of the rule of law through the promotion of good governance'.[219] Internally, however, DIAG was seen as 'a weapons collection programme supported by community development incentives'.[220]

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[217] Bhatia and Sedra, *Afghanistan, Arms*, 136-138.

[218] Overview of Afghanistan New Beginnings Programme on website United Nations Development Programme, http://www.undp.org.af/WhoWeAre/UNDPinAfghanistan/Projects/psl/prj_anbp. htm (accessed July 15, 2014). See also "Introduction To DIAG" on website ANBP http://www.anbp.af.undp.org/homepage/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=13&Itemid=34 (accessed 11 July 2014).

[219] Introduction to DIAG on the ANBP website: www.anbp.af.undp.org (accessed July 11, 2014). See also Overview of Afghanistan New Beginnings Programme on website United Nations Development Programme, http://www.undp.org.af/WhoWeAre/UNDPinAfghanistan/Projects/psl/prj_anbp. htm (accessed July 15, 2014).

[220] Afghan New Beginnings Programme, "Discussion paper – draft 2" dated January 19, 2005 (featuring comments from Afghan MoD, American coalition forces, British embassy) (unpublished); Afghan New Beginnings Programme, "Discussion Paper – draft 3" dated January 25, 2005 (featuring comments from Afghan MoD, American coalition forces, ISAF, Canadian embassy, British embassy) (unpublished).

Ahead of its main phase, DIAG aimed to reduce the number of public officials with links to IAGs. First, it targeted commanders who had registered as candidates in the parliamentary elections in September 2005. The JS had compiled a list of 1,108 candidates with potential links to armed groups and passed it to the Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC), the electoral dispute resolution body responsible for adjudicating disputes related to candidates' eligibility to run for office, which provisionally disqualified 207 candidates, leading to the submission of 4,857 weapons from 124 candidates.

Eventually, however, the ECC, under pressure from the government and foreign donors chose to exclude only thirty-four of the remaining eighty-three from the ballot. After the vote, the Afghanistan Human Rights Commission argued that more than 80 per cent of winning candidates (in Kabul 60 per cent) maintained ties to IAGs. The effort to reduce the number of government officials with links to such groups was similarly inauspicious. The JS compiled a list of 600 suspected cases, but it could only reach consensus on forty-one, of whom five were dismissed and eight partially or fully complied with the request to disarm.[221]

DIAG's initial failures showed again how 'deeply entrenched' patronage networks were in the Afghan government and society.[222] A senior DIAG official appeared near the top of DIAG's list of ten most politically-influential commanders, according to a former DIAG official.[223]

As with DDR, DIAG suffered from the accommodation approach of the Karzai government and its international allies. Especially in the run-up to the 2005 parliamentary polls they preferred to avoid confronting those commanders they believed could cause instability. This 'sent a signal to non-state actors that the government was not serious about disarmament'.[224]

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[221] Bhatia and Sedra, *Arms and Conflict*, 138, 139.
[222] Bhatia and Sedra. *Arms and Conflict*, 140.
[223] 502.
[224] Bhatia and Sedra, *Arms and Conflict*, 138, 139.

The same problems reappeared during the 2009 presidential and provincial council elections (when the ECC received 302 challenges and excluded fifty-four people for ties with illegal armed groups) and the 2010 parliamentary elections (when initially around 300 nominees were accused of having links with armed groups, but the ECC excluded thirty-six people, a little more than 1 per cent of the total number of candidates). Both vetting processes suffered from a lack of support from key international and Afghan ministries – who often failed to provide information – and from political interference.[225]

Key actors such as foreign donors, ISAF and Afghan factional leaders ultimately decided who could and could not run, instead of electoral legislation or DIAG rules. DIAG therefore was a deeply political process, rather than the technical exercise it appeared on paper. The real failure of candidate vetting before elections was not just that too few candidates were disqualified but that the criteria were manipulated for political purposes, conclude Patricia Gossman and Sari Kouvo on the 2005 parliamentary elections:

> The procedures for verifying who was a member of an illegal armed group were easily manipulated for political purposes, with no system for distinguishing reliable from fabricated reports. The only candidates eventually disqualified were those who had no powerful supporters in the institutions overseeing the vetting. The law was not enforced against prominent candidates who were known to have their own private militias, undermining the entire process.[226]

An insight into the manipulation of vetting ahead of the 2009 vote is provided by some of the U.S. embassy cables around that time. Two of the cables document a fierce struggle between the U.S., UK and Canada on one side and President Karzai on the other over Helmandi powerbrokers and Karzai allies former police chief Abdul Rahman Jan (aka ARJ) and former district governor Amir Mohammad Akhundzada (aka AMA), with JS chief Mohammad Masoom Stanekzai caught in the middle.

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[225] Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Lessons Learned in Preparing and Conducting Elections in Afghanistan," Letter to the Secretary of State, the U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan and officials of the U.S. Agency for International Development (9 September 2010); ICG, "Afghanistan's Elections Stalemate," *International Crisis Group* (February 23, 2011), 8.
[226] Patricia Gossman and Sari Kouvo, "Tell Us How This Ends, Transitional Justice and Prospects for Peace in Afghanistan," *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, 28.

According to a cable of May 2009 the U.S. and UK had successfully lobbied to include ARJ and AMA on a new DIAG list, which included 3,200 people each with between five and three hundred armed men and had been drawn up as result of a 'remapping' exercise. The remapping was meant to reinvigorate DIAG ahead of the 2009 elections. A media campaign warned people that if they were found to have links with armed groups they would not be able to participate in the elections.[227]

After ARJ and AMA had been included on the list (for 'strong ties to illegal armed groups, in addition to their narcotics trafficking links'[228]) Stanekzai told a U.S. official that he had been summoned more than ten times to the presidential palace and requested by Karzai to remove them and other Karzai supporters in Helmand. Stanekzai reported that after his refusal he was 'inundated with overt and implied threats by individuals ranging from mullahs to ministers who have flooded his office, he believes, at Karzai's behest. ARJ and AMA brought a 54-person militia during one of their four visits' to Stanekzai's office. They were not the only candidates lobbying to be dropped off the list. The cables also mention former Interior Minister Moqbel Zarar visiting Stanekzai with a 'fleet of armed men' requesting him to remove several names. Christian Lamarre, DIAG's JS Coordination Manager said: 'We've basically had the illegal armed groups we've been going after in our own parking lot'.[229]

Key considerations for international and national level actors involved in the manipulation of vetting seem to have run along two lines: first, a powerbroker's spoiler potential; and second, his loyalty or support to the actor in question. Their links to armed groups – the DIAG rule for exclusion from participation in elections – was thus a secondary consideration. In fact, it often worked the other way around; if

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[227] When the registration period closed on May 16 the DIAG secretariat identified around 200 possible matches out of 3300 candidates and sent the list to the ECC. However, as mentioned above eventually only 54 nominees were excluded for having ties with illegal armed groups. U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan, "Candidate Challenge Period Ends," U.S. Embassy Cable 09KABUL1319, May 26, 2009. Published by *Wikileaks*; 502.

[228] U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan, "Candidate Challenge Period Ends".

[229] U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan, "Candidate Vetting Minister Stanekzai Under Intense Pressure," U.S. Embassy Cable 09KABUL 1783, July 8, 2009. Published by *Wikileaks.org*.

strongmen were heavily armed it was usually considered to be all the more reason to not exclude them from participating.

The U.S. cables show how Karzai used the first argument, the threat that 'the tribes' of ARJ and AMA would turn against the government, to warn against disqualify them from the 2009 elections.[230] This may have been a consideration, and one that local powerbrokers often used to pressure patrons in Kabul. Presumably, though, his main motivation was their ability to muster votes for his re-election campaign. In this particular case, donors regarded ARJ and AMA as spoilers who should not be accommodated (the UK had been behind the removal of AMA's brother Sher Mohammad Akhundzada as governor of Helmand). But in other cases foreign donors were often swayed by the threat of potential spoilers. They were also protective of commanders who supported them in the fight against the Taliban, a consideration that gained increasing weight as insurgency grew rapidly after 2005 and spread across the country. These considerations obviously ran counter to the aims of DIAG.

DIAG rules thus did little to prevent well-connected strongmen obtaining a seat in local councils or parliament (much like the first DDR programme had not prevented the most powerful AMF commanders of obtaining an ANSF position and moving their militias in wholesale). Only weaker commanders without ties to foreign forces or patrons in Kabul were excluded; again reflecting and deepening the dynamic of political exclusion that became the main driver of violence in Afghanistan. As the case study of Baghlan in chapter 4 shows, former AMF commander Amir Gul reportedly became engaged in anti-government activities after he was disqualified from running in the 2005 parliamentary elections because of his ties to illegal armed groups. His exclusion reflected the weakened position at the time of his main patron Fahim (who had been fired as defense minister and dropped from the Karzai's ticket in the 2004 presidential elections). Because he had not been genuinely disarmed under the first DDR programme, he still had the means to cause trouble, which he did.

For local powerbrokers like Gul and others in the case studies, a seat in parliament was an attractive reintegration opportunity. It gave them prestige, while also allowing

[230] U.S. Embassy Cable, "Candidate Vetting".

them to obtain patronage opportunities emanating from the international aid flowing into the government. The provision on links to armed groups in the electoral law should have been an incentive to sever ties with local armed groups before participating in elections. There were, however, strong incentives, running contrary, to retaining ties to illegal armed groups – even though those links usually loosened over time once a strongman entered parliament. Maintaining the threat of violence secured support back home, including during election campaigns. Militias employed followers, who gained income from the illegal taxation of villagers, narcotics and from foreign aid to militias; a percentage of which had to be kicked up to the political patron, in this case the new parliamentarian, in Kabul. Access to armed men also served as insurance in case the democratic experiment failed and foreigners left Afghanistan, as they had done before.

The strongmen could thus keep one foot in government and one out; hedging their bets as they had done throughout decades of war. This development, while it fitted in Afghanistan's history of strong informal networks and a weak state, bode poorly for the international state building project, of which DIAG was nominally part. Rather than dismantling informal networks and transferring to state institutions the loyalty of their members, the integration of strongmen with links to armed groups in parliament and other government positions meant that instead informal networks took over the state. Rather than the state subsuming informal networks, those networks captured the state.

The question remains if breaking the links and command structures between commanders and their fighters, a key target of DIAG, was ever feasible. Most militias were based on pre-existing social networks – the solidarity networks or *qaum* mentioned in the introduction. The case studies show that commanders and fighters often had ethnic or sub-tribal ties, came from the same area or had fought side by side during the jihad. Demobilising the militias was not hard, but remobilising was just as easy, as men continued to see each other. As a 2009 evaluation observed:

> Virtually all Afghan qomanders are tied to their men by the concept of qawm. … Even if an IAG is formally disbanded, its members will still drink tea together because they probably all live in the same village as their qomander who will be a local farmer or the brother of the mullah, or indeed he may be

the mullah himself.[231]

Even former comrades who had been apart for many years were relatively easy to remobilise for a new fight, provided someone could pay. This was of course what had already happened in October 2001 at the time of the U.S.-led intervention. The case studies include the examples of Malem Mir Wali in Helmand and Mir Alam in Kunduz, two former jihadi commanders who, with international aid, simply revived their old mujahedeen networks to fight the Taliban. Malem Mir Wali mustered his old Hezb-e Islami sub-commanders, some of whom he had not seen for years as he had fled Helmand in the 1990s. Mir Alam brought together his former sub commanders from Jamiat.

In October 2001, before the fall of the Taliban regime, Hamid Karzai travelled to Uruzgan, to start an uprising against the Taliban – aided by the CIA. He knocked on the doors of the old jihadi commanders he knew from his visit to Uruzgan in the 1980s when he was working for a non-governmental organisation. These commanders were linked to his main ally, former governor and jihadi commander Jan Mohammad, who at the time was in prison in Kandahar (but was soon released as a result of high-level negotiations between Karzai and Taliban leaders). He also recruited Jan Mohammad's nephew Matiullah, at the time a Taliban conscript.

In order to help Karzai's uprising, Matiullah in his turn recruited many family members and friends from his home village. Later, thanks to the president's patronage, his half-brother in Kandahar and SOF, Matiullah became militia commander and eventually provincial police chief, and his family and friends were promoted alongside him. Their ties existed before Matiullah started working for Karzai (because they were family or friends from his village) and would therefore have continued to exist were those men ever demobilised (Matiullah was assassinated in March 2015).

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[231] Robin-Edward Poulton, "DIAG Evaluation, Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups in Afghanistan, A Project of the United Nations Development Programme & the Afghanistan's New Beginnings Programme," study commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme, *EPES Mandala Consulting*, April 22, 2009; see also case studies; 311.

Strongman Amir Gul in Baghlan kept his men in place in Baghlan-e Jadid district during decades of war by changing allegiances. He started out with Hezb-e Islami in the 1980s, switched to the Taliban as part of commander Bashir Baghlani's force in the 1990s and then, in 2001, he switched to Jamiat. In a 2014 interview, he claimed that his former sub-commanders and fighters—his *andiwal* (comrades)—were still loyal to him.[232] Of course, strongmen's claims about the undying loyalty of their men are frequently contradicted by complaints from subordinates of mismanagement, abuse and lack of payment. Short of leaving the province or even the country, it would, however, be impossible for subordinates to break all ties and remain safe.

In sum, long-standing ties between commanders and their men were difficult, if not impossible, to break, especially through a relatively superficial DIAG procedure. But more pressure from foreign donors and the Afghan government on all local strongmen, including the most powerful, would have made it more difficult for them to retain active links while in office, which would have bought time to establish stronger state institutions. Moreover, as the next section shows, despite the rhetoric on disarming illegal armed groups, the large-scale support of international and Afghan actors to non-state militia kept armed networks very much alive. In fact many networks massively expanded.

DIAG was thus unable to break patronage links – between commanders and their fighters, but also between commanders and their patrons in government, who helped them to evade disarmament. During the programme's main phase, which targeted IAGs across the country, high-profile government ministries, even those directly involved in the programme, obstructed and subverted it. Locally, the composition of the DIAG provincial committees often included governors or chiefs of police whose close ties to IAGs were widely known.

Complicating this further, ISAF also had strong reservations about the forced disarmament of militias, which was an element of DIAG that its predecessor, the first DDR programme, did not envisage.[233] As early as January 2005, ISAF officials

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232 Derksen, "The Politics," 41.

233 The main part of the programme was threefold: comprising voluntary compliance; negotiated compliance; and enforced compliance. Compliance was defined as the submission of 70 per cent of the weapons of the group in question. In a first stage

warned that without reinforcements of Afghan police, 'the destabilization of whole regions is at stake'.[234] International forces encountered more resistance than expected during their expansion into the southern provinces in 2006, and were immediately drawn into intensive counterinsurgency operations. From 2 until 17 September 2006 around 1,400 regular ISAF troops fought in Operation Medusa in Kandahar, the largest battle in Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban. But they were only able to beat back the Taliban temporarily, as follow-up operations showed.[235]

With such effort expended on fighting the growing insurgency, ISAF was reluctant to support the forceful disarmament of IAGs. A former DIAG official said that ISAF's unwillingness to contribute to DIAG significantly weighed on its failure. 'They did not want to upset the balance of power in their area; they were thinking in six-month terms. They torpedoed us in any way they could', said a former DIAG official.[236]

An internal planning document from DIAG's Joint Planning and Coordination Cell (JPCC) from April 2005 identified 395 high threat groups (high threat to the parliamentary elections planned for the fall of 2005, to counter narcotics efforts, and to good governance). Of these, twenty-five groups were deemed to threaten all three

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illegally armed groups could voluntarily disarm. Development projects would serve as a motivation to persuade the illegal armed group to comply. If the group did not voluntarily disarm in a second phase it would be engaged in negotiations at the national, provincial and village level, including officials, mullahs and elders. In a third phase the group would be targeted for enforced compliance by the MoI and the ANP. In 'extreme circumstances' the ANA and the international security forces 'could be called in to assist'. Bhatia and Sedra, *Arms and Conflict*, 142. Barbara Stapleton points out that ISAF support *in extremis* was agreed in principle in 2006 via the PRT Executive Steering Committee's Policy Note No 2 "PRT engagement in DIAG". However, neither ISAF officials nor international staff 'working within DIAG mechanisms' were aware of its existence one-and-a-half year after its creation. She concludes 'the enforcement phase has never been implemented'. Stapleton, "Disarming the Militias". Forced disbandment of militias was also not acceptable to factions of the Afghan government. This became clear when a pilot operation targeting a very minor Jombesh-e Melli Islami-ye Afghanistan (National Islamic Movement of Afghanistan) commander was stopped in 2007 and the topic of forced disbandment was not raised again by the management of the DIAG programme; 502.

[234] ANBP, "Discussion Paper – draft 2". ANBP, "Discussion paper – draft 3".

[235] Graeme Smith, *The Dogs Are Eating Them Now, Our War in Afghanistan*, (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013), p 60, 77; Adam Day, "Operation Medusa, The Battle for Panjwai," *Legion Magazine*, September 1, 2007.

[236] 502.

areas 'and would likely not comply' with DIAG. The document recommended targeting a few high threat groups, which would send a signal to others.[237] But without the buy-in of key actors, like ISAF and high-level Afghan officials, DIAG officials ended up just targeting 'low hanging fruit', focusing on districts 'which could easily be brought up to DIAG compliance levels'.[238] These were generally areas with low levels of violence, where militias were weak, and little was at stake for international actors. Therefore, as with DDR, efforts focused on northern and western provinces.[239] Like DDR, former Northern Alliance commanders saw the programme as a one-sided move against them, only now coming as the threat from the Taliban escalated.

Another reason behind ISAF's and the coalition forces' reluctance to support DIAG was their frequent collaboration with unofficial militias targeted for disbandment. As the training of a new army and police progressed more slowly than expected and the insurgency staged ever more violent attacks, international forces increasingly relied on militias for combat operations and securing bases. Internal DIAG documents reveal how desperate ISAF and coalition forces were for additional troops. One, an ANBP discussion document from 25 January 2005, which included comments from donors, the UN, the MoD, ISAF and the coalition forces, discusses the DIAG category of local militias, or 'small armed groups protecting villages against raiders'. ISAF comments: 'In order to come up with security gaps, could some of those local militias be temporarily registered and assist ANP? They would promise to follow a code of conduct and obey the governor'.[240]

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[237] DIAG Joint Planning and Coordination Cell, "Planning Document – draft 3" (planning document, April 17, 2005.

[238] DIAG progress report first quarter 2007. See for term low-hanging fruit http://www.undp.org.af/whoweare/undpinafghanistan/Projects/Reports/DIAG/Q1%202007%20DIAG%20Report.pdf) During the planning for DIAG it was expected that especially 'high threat' groups would 'require a more robust capacity than a voluntary local militia'. ANBP, "Discussion Paper – draft 2". ANBP, "Discussion Paper – draft 3".

[239] Giustozzi shows the north, northeast and western provinces account for 71 per cent of the weapons collected, and the south, southeast and east for only 16 per cent. Giustiozzi, "Bureaucratic Façade".

[240] ANBP, "Discussion Paper – draft 3".

Another internal ISAF document from 16 March 2005 says that these militias can be disbanded 'only after Afghan National Police (ANP) reaches the capability to provide security throughout Afghanistan'.[241] Later documents list militias working for foreign troops and international security companies separately from other IAGs. They suggest that the Afghan government would legitimise these particular militias: 'By giving these groups legitimacy they can immediately be discounted as far as an illegal militias disbandment programme is concerned'.[242]

The discussion documents show tensions between the Afghan government and the international community over control of militias working with the international military and their disbandment under DIAG. For example, in a paper dated 25 January 2005 featuring comments from Afghan MoD, American coalition forces, ISAF, Canadian embassy, British embassy, Afghan MoD officials request more influence regarding the Afghan Security Forces [also called Afghan Security Guards, militias working with coalition forces to secure bases and assist in combat], as they 'have committed crimes against Afghan citizens, perhaps using their position with the Coalition Forces to fulfill [sic] ethnic vendettas'. The Canadian embassy, however, replies: 'Attention needs to be given to activities of these groups when not under CF [Coalition Forces] command and control'. The comments of 'CFC', referring to Combined Forces Command Afghanistan (CFC-A), or the coalition forces, emphasise the difference between the Afghan Security Forces and the other militia categories, and says that it will plan the disbandment of the Afghan Security Forces 'quite separately' from that of other militias.[243]

Through this type of manoeuvring, for militias working with the international military troops or operating in areas where they were deployed, DIAG resulted not in their disbandment but in a push for their legalisation. This happened mostly through the registration of private security companies and a series of militia programmes that the U.S. started supporting from 2006 onwards: the Afghan National Auxiliary Police (ANAP) in 2006; the Afghan Public Protection Program (APPP or AP3); the Community Defense Initiative (CDI); the Local Defense Initiative (LDI), the Critical

241 International Security Assistance Force, "Concept of Operations".
242 ANBP, "Discussion Paper – draft 3".
243 ANBP, "Discussion Paper – draft 3".

Infrastructure Program (CIP) and, the latest, the Afghan Local Police (ALP), which started in 2010 and continues now. International forces did not initiate all programmes and formally many were managed by the government. In reality, though, militias 'often had closer relationships with foreign forces than with the government'.[244]

From the perspective of commanders of those illegal armed groups targeted by DIAG it was more interesting to join a militia programme than to comply with DIAG, for two main reasons. First, the growing Taliban insurgency – which was, as the case studies show, to a great extent the result of their own predatory behaviour – made it more important than ever to keep their weapons and men close by.

Second, DIAG offered no reintegration alternative. After some debate between the ANBP, ISAF, American coalition forces, main donors and the Defense Ministry during the programme's design stage, it had been decided that participants should not get individual reintegration packages. This was major shift from DDR and reflected Western reluctance to reward 'criminals'. [245] Instead, DIAG provided only development projects 'to those districts which become compliant and free of IAGs', assuming that communities could influence the mobilisation and demobilisation of militias. [246] This assumption, however – which both DIAG and the later ALP programme were based on – was out-dated. As a former DIAG official says: 'That idea was based on the Afghan social structure before 1978'.[247] Wars since had disrupted this structure and community enforcement was not feasible.

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[244] Jonathan Goodhand and Aziz Hakimi, "Counterinsurgency, Local Militias and Statebuilding in Afghanistan," *United States Institute of Peace*, 2014, 9. Afghan and international security actors – factions in the Karzai government; the international military, the CIA for example – also unilaterally backed militias outside the programmes listed above, like the Kandahar Strike Force and the Khost Protection team; 301.
[245] Dennys, "Disarmament, Demobilization and Rearmament", 9; DIAG Joint Planning and Coordination Cell, "Planning Document – draft 3".
[245] Introduction to DIAG on the ANBP website: http://www.anbp.af.undp.org/homepage/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2&Itemid=17 (Accessed 8 June).
[246] Introduction to DIAG on the ANBP website: http://www.anbp.af.undp.org/homepage/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2&Itemid=17 (Accessed 8 June).
[247] 502.

By the beginning of 2011, DIAG had collected 49,786 weapons. They represented less than 15 per cent of the programme's target and fewer than half those surrendered were categorised as usable.[248] The last United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) annual report from the end of 2010 said in total 759 IAGs had been disbanded. It claimed this was 94 per cent of its target, even though initial estimations put the number of militias between 1,870 and 3,200. The DIAG programme, originally planned to end in 2007, still exists as part of the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Programme, discussed below, and has cells in the MoI and the MoD. According to Afghan officials, DIAG collects only weapons from participants in the APRP and from defeated insurgents. However, a well-informed high-level Afghan government official says: 'DIAG still exists on paper but in term of content and quality it does not exist anymore'. His view, which is shared by others, is that:

> Everyone has a different perception about DIAG but I believe the increasing insurgency and the widening corruption are rooted in the poor implementation of DIAG and the presence of irresponsible armed groups in Afghanistan.[249]

On paper, DIAG had perhaps most potential of all DDR programmes in that it covered all illegal armed groups in Afghanistan. It came at a critical time, when some former commanders were deciding whether join the expanding insurgency—especially in the south and the east. It offered, however, no benefits to individual participants, who were viewed as criminals. At the same time many were not disarmed, because both Afghan factions and foreign troops protected commanders linked to them. ISAF was also wary of rocking the boat in an already insecure environment and thus refrained from assisting the ANSF in enforcing compliance. DIAG thus lacked both carrots and sticks. It has had very little impact on Afghanistan's informal security sector. The commanders featured in the case studies, who participated in DIAG, were actually more heavily armed after DIAG than they had been before. Some benefited from the legalisation of their militias – arguably DIAG's main impact.

DDR had reinforced political exclusion because it enabled powerful commanders to disarm and weaken their rivals and obtain attractive government positions. DIAG

[248] Sedra, "Afghanistan and the Folly," 483-484.
[249] 413.

targeted illegal militias, many of whom were ex-AMF commanders who had not been sufficiently well-connected to enter government after DDR, but who had not been effectively disarmed. The most powerful among this group entered provincial councils and parliament without severing ties to their illegal armed groups. As the insurgency gathered pace, other relatively well-connected commanders benefited from programmes that legalised militias, the most prominent of which was the ALP, which enabled them to prey on weaker commanders. In short, after DDR had led to the inclusion in government of the most powerful commanders and the exclusion of weaker ones, DIAG repeated this dynamic, again reinforcing political exclusion.

Chapter 3 Demobilising Enemies: PTS and APRP

3.1. Programme Tahkim Sulh (PTS)

In 2005, the year that DIAG was created, a separate DDR programme was established for the Taliban, called *Programme Takhim Sulh* (PTS), or the Strengthening Peace Program. The Taliban's separate treatment was rooted in the fact that the post-2001 political order was based not on a peace agreement between the warring parties, but on the victory of U.S. allies and the exclusion of the Taliban. Though Taliban commanders had been targeted for ad-hoc disarmament after the fall of their regime they were not included in any official DDR programme until the PTS in 2005.

Faced with a growing insurgency in 2004 and at the same time wanting to free up troops for Iraq, the U.S. had started supporting plans to offer amnesty to mid-level insurgent commanders and their fighters in exchange for their surrender. In anticipation of the Afghan government's launch of the PTS, the U.S. military started to register low-level Taliban willing to disarm and return home. 'By next summer we'll have a much better sense if the security threat is diminished as a result of, say, a significant reconciliation with large numbers of Taliban', Lieutenant-General David Barno, the head of the U.S. led troops in Afghanistan (Combined Forces Command – Afghanistan) said in December 2004.[250]

In the meantime Karzai, contending with strong former Northern Alliance factions in the transitional administration, tried to reach out to marginalised Pashtuns.[251] In a speech to a gathering of *ulema* in Kabul in April 2003 he said 'the ordinary Taliban who are real and honest sons of this country' were different to those 'who still use the

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250 "Countries draw up Taliban proposal," *Chicago Tribune*, 2004. See also Colonel David Lamm, "Success in Afghanistan Means Fighting Several Wars at Once," *Armed Forces Journal*, November 2005. Between the summer of 2003 and the summer of 2004 close to 1,000 people were killed in attacks mostly linked to Taliban. Less than a year later the insurgency was estimated to be 2,000 strong. Sayed Salahuddin, "U.S. Military Worried by Afghan Infighting in West," *Reuters*, August 16, 2004; "Top US general in Afghanistan sees major Taliban attacks in coming months," *Agence France Presse*, April 17, 2005.

251 On Pashtun alienation also see ICG, "Afghanistan: The Problem of Pashtun Alienation," *International Crisis Group*, August 5, 2003.

Taliban cover to disturb peace and security in the country'. No one had 'the right to harass/persecute anyone under the name of Talib/Taliban anymore'.[252]

The PTS was established in March 2005 by presidential decree. It had twelve offices, mostly in the south and east, and was supported by the U.S., the UK and The Netherlands. Participants had to disarm and accept the constitution in exchange for guarantees they would not be arrested. The programme also saw detainees released from the U.S.-controlled Parwan detention centre and Guantanamo (529 detainees were released, according to the Small Wars Journal).[253]

American Lieutenant-General Barno predicted that the Taliban insurgency would collapse in a few months time as rank and file Taliban accepted the government's reconciliation offer. But the expanding insurgency and an increase in suicide attacks quickly disproved him. Despite the growing insurgency, PTS administrators' claimed to have brought in 8,700 militants by the programme's end in July 2011. The International Crisis Group quoted UK and U.S. officials saying that figure was highly inflated. Also, half of those benefiting from PTS support were not actually insurgents, according to an unreleased UN study cited in a report from Harvard and Tufts Universities. Research for this report supports these findings. Another indication that the programme had not worked was the fact that, as with its successor the APRP, numbers were higher in the northeast than in the southwest, the Taliban heartland. In fact in Kunduz and Baghlan, which both had high numbers of participants on paper, at the time of the start of the PTS in 2005 there was no insurgency.[254]

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[252] Amin Terzi, "Afghanistan: Is Reconciliation With The Neo-Taliban Working?," *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, June 2, 2005. See also Derksen, "The Politics"; On Pashtun alienation also see ICG, "Afghanistan: The Problem of Pashtun Alienation," *International Crisis Group*, August 5, 2003.

[253] The Afghanistan National Independent Peace and Reconciliation Commission's official website (now taken offline) did not feature a description of the reintegration procedure therefore the description of the International Crisis Group is used. ICG, "Talking about Talks: Towards a Political Settlement in Afghanistan," *International Crisis Group*, 2012. For more on the PTS programme see also Joanna Nathan, "A Review of Reconciliation Efforts in Afghanistan," *CTC Sentinel*, August 15, 2009.

[254] The estimated number of insurgents grew to around 12,000 in 2006 according to the Taliban's own estimate, half that according to NATO countries and the number of suicide attacks, a new method, increased from 17 in 2005 to 123 in 2006. Carlotta Gall, "Taliban Surges as U.S. Shifts some Tasks to NATO," *New York Times*, June 11, 2006; David Rohde, "Afghan Suicide Attacks Rising, Report Shows," *New York*

What went wrong? Why did the PTS seemingly fail to attract many Taliban commanders and fighters? Although, in contrast to DDR, the programme was Afghan-owned, its influence seemed limited to the patronage network of its head, Sibghatullah Mojadeddi (a former speaker of the National Assembly's upper house, former acting president (after the fall of the Najibullah government in 1992) and leader of Jebh-e Nejat-e Milli (National Liberation Front)). PTS also suffered from weak institutional arrangements. It had few offices, was understaffed, under-resourced and opaque, according to a 2009 report by the Chr. Michelsen Institute.[255]

According to PTS officials, outreach to the Taliban was left to elders in each area, who also functioned as a vetting committee. If they believed a candidate qualified, they sent a letter guaranteeing his cooperation to Kabul. In response the commission would issue a letter signed by Mojadeddi, and with a fingerprint from the participant, which stated that he accepted the constitution. The commission would also request that the governor help him, for example by giving him land.

However, interviews in June 2008 with participants, who were in the Kabul PTS office and claimed to be with the Taliban or Hezb-e Islami in Helmand, Kunar and Uruzgan, suggest that the PTS programme offered little beyond the letter. Participants had no place to stay in Kabul but could not return to their home provinces. Fighting was still raging there and the letter from the PTS head Mojadeddi would not guarantee help from local governments who, until recently, participants had been fighting. Instead, they said, they feared for their lives.[256]

The issues with PTS clearly went beyond technical problems with management and funding. Instead, the causes for its failure should be sought in the political environment in which it took place. Crucial to understanding this environment, both

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Times, September 9, 2007; ICG, "Talking about Talks"; Matan Chorey and Jake Sherman, "The Prospects for Security and Political Reconciliation in Afghanistan: Local, National and Regional Perspectives" (report for a workshop from Harvard Kennedy School and Tufts University, May 2010).

[255] Lamm, "Success"; Astri Suhrke et al., "Conciliatory Approaches to the Insurgency in Afghanistan: Overview," *Chr. Michelsen Institute*, 2009, 17, 18. See also Derksen, "The Politics".

[256] Derksen, "The Politics," 16.

on national and subnational level, is to take a closer look at the Taliban's genesis between their 2001 ousting from power and the programme's launch in 2005.

Taliban representatives were excluded from the Bonn Conference in 2001, which laid the foundations for Afghanistan's new political order. The head of the UN delegation to the conference, Lakhdar Brahimi, later said their exclusion was a mistake. But '[a]ny talk about reaching out to the Taliban or those of them who might agree to join the Bonn process was unceremoniously dismissed'.[257] Francesc Vendrell, the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General in Afghanistan at the time of the Bonn Conference, said everyone knew that inviting Taliban leaders would be unacceptable to the U.S. As a result no party to the talks suggested doing so.[258] The overriding concern of the U.S. was to seek retribution for the September 11 attacks and prevent 'terrorists' sheltering in Afghanistan. President Bush declared: '[N]o cave is deep enough to escape the patient justice of the United States of America'.[259]

Were it not for the hawkish U.S. stance, opportunities for the reintegration of high-level Taliban did exist, especially in the south. On the Taliban side, a number of senior figures, with the 'prominent exception' of the movement's leader Mullah Omar, were willing to accept the new government, writes former CIA Islamabad station chief Robert Grenier. Senior Taliban members approached Karzai to negotiate their surrender. He was at the time in Uruzgan, where he had tried to foment a tribal uprising against the Taliban with help from the CIA. En route to Kandahar, Karzai met with Taliban delegations on 5 and 6 December, while the international community and anti-Taliban Afghan factions met in Bonn to discuss Afghanistan's future.[260]

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[257] Lakhdar Brahimi made the comments during a round table discussion at the Brookings Institution, "Memo to the President: Expand the Agenda in Pakistan and Afghanistan," December 18, 2008.
[258] Derksen, "The Politics", 14.
[259] Speech of President George W. Bush to The Citadel Military College of South Carolina, 11 December 2001. "Selected Speeches of President George W. Bush 2001-2008," 91.
[260] Robert L. Grenier, *88 Days to Kandahar – A CIA Diary*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2015), 360-361; 205; 210; 544.

According to Grenier, Karzai, who was appointed on 6 December as the head of the interim government, tended towards generosity in promises to Taliban officials. But at the same time he did not want to jeopardise American support. 'To the extent he could intuit U.S. attitudes, they were reflexively hostile toward anyone associated with the Taliban. Karzai's political room for manoeuvre was extremely limited….'[261]

The U.S. government also appeared to have no clear policy on dealing with Taliban leaders. Grenier: 'There were never, to my knowledge, any clear discussions, let alone any agreement, between Karzai and any American authority concerning the status or potential reintegration of senior Taliban members into Afghan political life'. Regarding his own role, Grenier notes: 'From the collapse of the Taliban government in December 2001 until my departure from Pakistan in June 2002, I neither sought nor received any sort of policy guidance regarding senior Taliban figures, many of whom were thought to have fled to Pakistan'.[262]

Participants of the first meeting between Karzai and Taliban senior figures on 5 December 2001 recount that Karzai promised the Taliban delegation that he would be able to hold off airstrikes to allow them to reach Pakistan, in return for the release of prisoners (including former jihadi commander Jan Mohammad profiled in the Uruzgan case study). According to one participant, airstrikes ceased when the meeting was taking place, but resumed immediately the prisoners were handed over; an indication that Karzai could not deliver on his promises.[263]

The following day Karzai met with a larger group, who claimed to be acting on Mullah Omar's behalf.[264] They agreed to a truce with Karzai in return for an amnesty

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[261] Grenier, *88 Days*, 252.
[262] Grenier, *88 Days*, 361, 362.
[263] 544; 205; 210.
[264] This group included Tayeb Agha, at one point Mullah Omar's top aide; Mullah Beradar, a former governor and key military commander; Sayed Muhammad Haqqani, the former ambassador to Pakistan; Mullah Obaidullah, the defense minister; Mullah Abdul Razzak, the interior minster. Anand Gopal, "Flash to the Past: Missed Opportunities for Reconciliation," *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, 15 November 2010.

that 'would allow them to live in security and dignity'.[265] However, Defence Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld said amnesty was unacceptable. To the Americans, 'and particularly the Department of Defence', most if not all senior members of the Taliban had al-Qaeda connections, 'and their detention therefore an imperative of the "War on Terror"'.[266] Taliban leaders, some of whom returned to their villages and sent letters of support to President Karzai after he was inaugurated on 22 December 2001, were 'were soon hunted down by U.S. Special Operations Forces'.[267]

Many senior Taliban figures were able to escape to Pakistan, some under the cover of the surrender agreement with Karzai on 6 December, which had been brokered by Kandahari powerbroker Mullah Naqibullah. Numerous others were arrested and ended up in Guantanamo or detention centres in Afghanistan, including Mullah Abdul Salam Zaeef, the Taliban ambassador to Pakistan who was arrested by the ISI and Wakil Ahmed Muttawakil, the former foreign minister, who had surrendered to Kandahar governor Gul Agha Shirzai's men and was turned over to the Americans.[268]

American hostility towards the Taliban, combinated with a lack of a clear policy on what to do with senior figures, resulted in their arbitrary treatment and contributed to their 'early alienation'.[269] Many observers and western officials, even some within the

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[265] Barnett Rubin, "What I Saw in Afghanistan," *New Yorker*, July 1, 2015. Karzai wasn't the only one being wooed. Former Defense Minister Oibadullah and former Justice Minister Nooruddin Turabi for example surrendered in Kandahar, where governor Gul Agha Shirzai ruled. In early 2002 the spokesperson for the Kandahar governor announced that former Taliban ministers and senior officials were surrendering 'to tribal forces'. He said they would be granted amnesty and protected until accused of a crime. "Reports: Senior Taliban Leaders Surrender", *ABC News*, undated. However, the New York Times pointed out that 'U.S. officials have repeatedly expressed their determination to kill Taliban leaders or take them into custody — or at least be assured they will not be able to return to positions of power'. Brian Knowlton, "U.S. Seems Sure to Oppose Amnesty Proposed by Afghan Captors : 3 Taliban Leaders Said to Surrender," *New York Times*, January 9, 2002.
[266] Grenier, *88 Days*, 360-362.
[267] Rubin, "What I Saw".
[268] Grenier, *88 Days*, 285, 361-362; 564.
[269] Analysts have pointed to the relatively arbitrary treatment of Taliban. Joanna Nathan writes: 'In many cases, the use of airpower or arbitrary detentions was the result of information provided to U.S. forces by new allies seeking to settle old scores, the very randomness (and/or inaccuracy) of action contributing to early alienation. Taliban camp cooks were reported to be on trial while a former international

U.S. government, believe that the U.S. should have taken a more reconciliatory approach towards the Taliban leaders in 2001 and 2002, many of whom ended up as insurgent commanders in later years.[270]

Grenier writes:

> It seemed clear that there would have to be some process of reconciliation with the rank-and-file of the Taliban, and for that to be credible, reconciliation would have to extend to members of the leadership who were neither under indictment for crimes nor had any continuing relations with al-Qa'ida.[271]

The U.S. government wasn't as overtly hostile to the idea of reintegrating lower-level Taliban in 2001, though again a clear policy was lacking. There seemed to be little awareness that the high-level discussions between Karzai and Taliban leaders were replicated in villages all over Afghanistan between mid-level commanders and village elders or U.S. backed commanders. In fact, the Taliban regime was toppled without much fighting partly thanks to the massive defection of the regime's rank and file. Thomas Barfield writes:

> The war did not have any decisive battles. Just as the Taliban had come to power by persuading people that they were winners without fighting and buying the defection of wavering commanders with suitcases full of hundred dollar bills, they lost the war in the reverse process.[272]

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spokesman went to Yale. Some former Taliban leaders were detained at Guantanamo Bay, while others worked for the government with no transparent criteria for such decisions'. Nathan, "A Review".
Kate Clark explored the backgrounds of the five Guantanamo detainees who were swapped for POW Bowe Bergdahl in June 2014. Clark notes that three of the five detainees "were taken to Guantanamo after they had either surrendered peacefully in return for promised safe passage home or had reached out to the new administration in Kabul". Former chief of the army staff Fazl Mazlum was the "only one of the five to face accusations of explicit war crimes and they are, indeed, extremely serious". Kate Clark, "Bergdahl and the Guantanamo Five – The Long Awaited US Taleban Prisoner Swap", *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, 4 June 2014.

[270] For example, Mullah Obaidullah played an important role in reorganising the Taliban movement to fight an insurgency; Tayeb Agha became one of Mullah Omar's envoys; Mullah Beradar became the day-to-day leader of the entire movement. Gopal, "Flash to the Past".

[271] Grenier, 88 Days, 362.

[272] Thomas Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History*, (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010), 270.

Indeed, loyalties were much more fluid and complex than the simplistic view, which tended to guide the American leadership's thinking, of Taliban versus anti-Taliban. Over decades of war, warring commanders tended to remain in contact with each other. Many hedged their bets, jumping ship when the other side appeared to be winning. Contacts on the other side could run along, for example, sub-tribal or familial lines or could have been established when commanders had been fighting on the same side previously. Someone trusted by both sides could broker talks between commanders or between commanders and other community leaders.

Examples of defections in the provincial case studies abound. For example, Taliban commander Amir Gul from Baghlan district Baghlan-e Jadid joined Jamiat troops before they entered Kunduz. In Kunduz former Hezb-e Islami commanders from an influential Uzbek family, the Ibrahimis, incorporated fighters who had previously defected to the Taliban into their militias. In Helmand many Taliban fighters joined the militias of former jihadi commanders Sher Mohammad Akhundzada and Malem Mir Wali. Even the armed group that Karzai mobilised in Uruzgan included Taliban fighters. In fact the most successful reintegration of Taliban mid-level commanders and foot soldiers since 2001 almost certainly took place not in official programmes in the second half of the decade but informally and around this time.[273]

The U.S. government, however, appears to have largely missed the main implication of this mass defection – that it could easily be reversed. Sure enough, as the political climate for many defectors changed, so did their loyalty. U.S.–backed commanders welcomed defecting Taliban commanders only as long as they were still fighting the Taliban regime. Once it was toppled and a scramble for posts in the new government began, calculations changed. U.S. support went not to those who adopted a conciliatory approach towards former regime members, but to the most effective Taliban and al-Qaeda hunters (commanders even received bounties for catching senior Taliban).

[273] See case studies and Derksen, "The Politics," 15.

New government officials thus 'benefited from maintaining the Taliban as a hostile force and the main threat to the regime'.[274] New powerbrokers targeted even those former Taliban who had surrendered for disarmament. In the best-case scenario, ex-combatants could strike a deal, hand over their weapons to a trusted tribal elder or to the local strongman, and then go home or escape to Pakistan. But for many surrendering Taliban, disarmament happened at gunpoint and was accompanied by looting, beatings and killings.[275]

The new governors, police chiefs and other government officials effectively exploited the anti-Taliban climate to disarm and harass people from or connected to rival armed networks – often made up of people belonging to other ethnic groups, tribes or sub-tribes – by labelling them as Taliban, even if they had not been part of the former regime. The provincial case studies on Kunduz and Baghlan illustrate how, in the ethnically diverse north, revenge was taken on Pashtuns seen as associated with the Taliban rule. A minority ethnic group in the north (and majority ethnic group in the south, the Taliban heartland), estimated to number around one million in that area, Pashtuns had been relatively safe under the Taliban regime. But after the Taliban's fall, non-Pashtun militias harassed them under the guise of disarmament. As early as 2002 Human Rights Watch highlighted the 'killings, sexual violence, beatings, extortion, and looting' in northern Pashtun villages.[276]

A tribal elder from Kunduz recalls how most important positions in the local administration were taken by non-Pashtuns. 'Everyone was looking at the Pashtuns as Taliban'.[277] A Pashtun member of the Baghlan provincial council, says:

> The Pashtuns had a horrible life after the fall of the Taliban in Baghlan. Even those with no connection to the Taliban, who were never with the Taliban were accused of affiliation. I remember a shopkeeper paid $2000 to escape

[274] Semple, *Reconciliation*, 48.
[275] As the provincial case studies, based on interviews with people directly involved in these events, show.
[276] HRW, "Paying for the Taliban's Crimes: Abuses Against Ethnic Pashtuns in Northern Afghanistan," *Human Rights Watch*, 14: 2, 2002, 1. See also Carlotta Gall, "A Nation Challenged: Ethnic Violence; Pashtuns, Once Favored by Taliban, Now Face Retribution in Afghanistan's North", *New York Times*, 12 April 2003.
[277] 013.

> imprisonment after someone had falsely accused him of having links with the Taliban.[278]

In the predominantly Pashtun south, new powerbrokers often portrayed personal rivals from other sub-tribes and clans as Taliban. These men were then targeted for 'disarmament'. As the case studies on Uruzgan and Helmand show, this often included violent repression. In Uruzgan, governor Jan Mohammad's men killed, tortured and unlawfully detained those from rival armed networks who they labelled as Taliban supporters, even though many were not. Their victims knew there was no way to pursue justice legally, as Jan Mohammad enjoyed the backing of both the Karzai government and SOF. In Helmand, the Kabul government's and U.S. patronage was divided among several groups. As a result they fiercely competed and used the cover of the Taliban hunt to try and take out commanders from the rival groups.

In the meantime, many Taliban commanders and fighters who had quickly switched sides in the fall of 2001, when fighting was ongoing, had become part of the AMF. This was – as Chapter 1 suggests – a parking area for Fahim's patronage network, which was stronger in the north and west than in the south and southeast, the Taliban heartland. So long as the AMF commanders in the south had some claim on a place in the new government, they kept relatively quiet. Moreover, in addition to the AMF, in the south U.S. patronage in the form of positions in the Afghan Security Guards; militias helping them to guard military bases and fight the Taliban provided other opportunities.

Former Taliban in the AMF, or commanders from sub-tribes or clans that had been supportive of the Taliban regime, were generally in the weakest positions. This was unsurprising given that Taliban leaders had not been reintegrated in the new political order, but, instead, were on the run in Pakistan or imprisoned. When the first DDR programme was rolled out in the south in 2004, these AMF commanders were the first to lose out. Their lack of patrons meant that unlike other former AMF commanders, they could not find a new position that offered them protection. This meant that they were vulnerable to harassment. They started looking for new protectors.

[278] 122.

Had the U.S.–led coalition in Afghanistan been more aware of how quickly loyalties could shift as circumstances changed, the increasing violence around 2004 and 2005 would have come as less of a surprise. In fact Taliban leaders in Pakistan easily found recruits to launch an insurgency. Among them were former Taliban commanders who had been harassed since 2001, humiliated by disarmament in the immediate aftermath of the intervention or who had switched sides in 2001, reintegrated in the AMF but then left vulnerable after the first DDR programme to the predation of new powerbrokers. Then there were former mujahedeen commanders, village elders and others who had been falsely accused by their rivals of having supported the Taliban regime and were persecuted as a result.

New insurgents were indirectly helped in many places in the south and east by powerbrokers who felt disgruntled after losing their jobs in the Karzai government, the result of efforts to weed out warlords from the government, including through the first DDR programme. Again, Uruzgan and Helmand provide excellent case studies. The wider perception among Pashtun leaders in the south and southeast that Pashtuns were marginalised in the new political order, with Shura-ye Nazar dominating the important security ministries, did not help.[279]

The PTS programme addressed none of the conditions that led insurgents to mobilise against the government. Nor in itself could it. The only way in which the programme could have potentially met any success is as part of a more comprehensive political strategy to create a more inclusive and less predatory government, both on the national and on the subnational level. Such a strategy would have had to include engagement with Taliban leaders.

But on neither side of the battlefield did there appear to be any real interest in coming to the negotiating table. Nor did coherent policy on the issue exist. By 2005, when the PTS programme started, the Taliban leadership, now operating as an insurgency, had grown in confidence and seemed less reconciliatory than in 2001. They blocked the

[279] ICG, "Pashtun Alienation".

PTS scheme and Mullah Obaidullah Akhund, a deputy of Mullah Omar, told Reuters that the Taliban would 'never surrender'.[280]

In reality the movement was divided, with hardliners intent on the armed struggle while a more politically-oriented faction 'hoped for encouragement from the Afghan government, and in its absence were paralyzed'.[281] An initiative from this faction to create a political party faltered.[282] By the time the Karzai government started to show some interest in the politically oriented faction's political party initiative, in 2005, the growing insurgency meant it was too late for 'potential peace-makers' on the insurgent side to play a major role in reconciliation.

Karzai himself had an ad-hoc approach to negotiations with insurgent leaders. He used appeals to Mullah Omar and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a former rival of Omar who had joined the insurgency after 2001, mostly to his own advantage. He 'jealously guarded his primacy in reconciliation', which led to clashes with foreign officials on international efforts to talk to the Taliban.[283] Meanwhile, those international efforts 'suffered from too many external actors with diverse interests and divergent strategies'. There were many bilateral, but informal and uncoordinated, contacts with insurgents by U.S., UK, German and other European officials.[284] The U.S. officially opposed talks with the Taliban until 2010.

The introduction of the PTS programme in 2005 again showed a lack of a coherent approach on the side of the Afghan government and its international allies to the Taliban leadership. Initially Mujaddedi reportedly said that 'there was no bar to the inclusion [in the PTS programme] of even Mullah Omar and Hekmatyar for

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[280] Simon Cameron-Moore, "US general sees Taliban split over ending struggle," *Reuters*, October 12, 2004.
[281] Semple, "Reconciliation," 47. See also Anand Gopal, "Flash to the Past: Missed Opportunities for Reconciliation," *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, November 15, 2010; International Crisis Group, "Talking", 30; Semple, "Reconciliation," 47.
[282] Kate Clark, "Another Hit at the High Peace Council: Arsala Rahmani Killed (amended)," *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, May 13, 2012; Anand Gopal, "Flash to the Past: Missed Opportunities for Reconciliation," *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, November 15, 2010.
[283] Nathan, "A Review".
[284] ICG, "Talking," 25.

reconciliation'.[285] He retracted his words, however, and Karzai and U.S. Ambassador Zalmai Khalilzad made a list of around 150 Taliban who were not eligible for amnesty. Later that too was reversed.[286]

No high-level Taliban joined the PTS and the programme focused on low-level commanders and fighters. Senior Taliban who did reconcile (as happened with twelve of the 142 Taliban figures named in the UN Security Council sanctions list by 2008) usually did so not through official programmes but through what Semple calls 'political sponsorship'; an informal process in which Taliban leaders sought the protection and support of a senior figure in the administration, based on an old acquaintance or network links. The Afghan National Security Council, which included officials close to Karzai, played a central role in holding secret talks and reconciling insurgent commanders. President Karzai's brother, Abdul Qayum Karzai, was also closely involved.[287]

Attempts to cultivate members of Hekmatyar's Hezb-e Islami faction yielded more promising results. Hezb-e Islami registered as a party in 2005 and by 2012 negotiations had led to almost fifty members of its political wing 'holding positions in the cabinet, parliament and civilian ministries or serve as provincial governors and in district-level government offices', even though an armed wing under Hekmatyar's command kept operating against the Karzai government.[288]

How, in these conditions, did the PTS play out on the ground? The provincial case studies explore its failure in specific provinces in more detail. In general, though, a

[285] Nathan, "A Review".
[286] Victoria Burnett, "US extends an olive branch to Taliban's 'moderates'; Amnesty Seeks to Boost Afghan Government", *The Boston Globe*, January 2, 2005; Carlotta Gall, "Afghanistan Offers Amnesty to Wanted Taliban Rebels," *New York Times*, May 9, 2005.
[287] Semple, *Reconciliation*, 39-41, 52; ICG, "Talking," 23, 28. See also Derksen, "The Politics".
[288] ICG, "Talking," 23, 30, 31.

few major obstacles prevented the Taliban commanders and fighters laying down their weapons under the PTS.[289]

First and foremost, by 2005 local administrations remained exclusive and predatory. If anything, power was even more concentrated in the hands of a few than four years earlier. The U.S. backed commanders that had taken over in 2001 had consolidated their position by moving allies into the police, the local branches of the NDS or provincial councils. The first DDR programme allowed them to disarm weaker rivals. Everyone in the provinces knew the strongmen could act with impunity, harassing and even killing those they labelled as Taliban, as they were backed by factions in Kabul and, in the south, by SOF. It was hardly surprising that the PTS participants whom the author met in Kabul feared for their lives if they returned home.

Second, the PTS programme offered the Taliban only surrender in return for amnesty. While in 2001 this would have been acceptable for many, by 2005 the situation had changed. Taliban commanders had fresh memories of how they had been treated in 2001 and since. They were operating in a resurgent insurgency movement. Their position was thus very different from when they were scattered and on the run in 2001. The removal in 2006 of some provincial powerbrokers from their positions, following donor pressure, gave the insurgency further room for manoeuvre, as the disgruntled strongmen did everything they could to show that with them 'their' province would become unstable – in some cases even by helping the Taliban.

Taliban leaders' price for laying down their arms had, therefore, only gone up since 2001. Without a political settlement with the leadership lower level Taliban commanders had no chance to find a place in the local administration, let alone to distribute patronage from that position to their fighters. On the contrary, in a context of worsening warfare, they would more likely face assassination, either by former comrades as a punishment for their defection, or by former enemies. They would also risk international troops mistaking them for an insurgent or local commanders taking revenge. All in all, it was hardly a tempting prospect.

[289] The provincial case studies are based on interviews with people directly involved in what is described here, including current and former Taliban commanders, former PTS officials, other local government officials and tribal elders.

Third, the U.S. military, in 2005 still the main international actor in the provinces, understood poorly, if at all, that exclusionary and predatory local governance was a main drivers of the insurgency. In a media interview in the autumn of 2004 Lieutenant-General Barno said of the motivations of the Taliban: 'In a different kind of guerrilla war, you might see ideology motivating your fighters or some other type of commitment, but here we're seeing money being a significant factor. Which is very interesting to us. To me, it reflects that there is no passion, no commitment, no nationalistic streak that this thing is being driven by'.[290]

The U.S. therefore approached the PTS with unrealistic expectations and a non-conciliatory attitude. Colonel David Lamm, who served as chief of staff of the Combined Forces Command in Afghanistan in 2004 and 2005, expressed the U.S. views when he wrote about the U.S. efforts to release Taliban detainees from the Parwan detention center and Guantanamo: 'The purpose was not simply one of goodwill, but sound strategy: We sought to create seams, fissures and doubt among the insurgent groups, al-Qaeda, the Taliban and the home-grown organization of Afghan Islamist warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar'.[291]

Fourth, the Afghan government and its international allies had no clear and consistent policy on how to reintegrate lower-level Taliban. Though the PTS offered a plan on paper, in reality international troops and Afghan officials in the provinces adopted ad-hoc measures, the content of which could vary greatly from place to place. Although some adaption to local circumstances made sense, a major problem was that Afghan and international officials disagreed on the best approach to reintegrate Taliban, even internally. The examples of the Musa Qala and Sangin peace deals, respectively in 2006 and 2010, explored in more detail in the Helmand provincial case study, show how they failed partly because of these divisions and even competition.

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[290] Simon Cameron-Moore, "US general sees Taliban split over ending struggle", *Reuters*, 10 December 2004.
[291] Lamm, "Success"; Astri Suhrke, Chaudhary Wimpelmann, Hakimi Torunn, Aziz Hakimi, Kristian Berg Harpviken, Akbar Sarwari, Arne Strand, "Conciliatory Approaches to the Insurgency in Afghanistan: Overview," *Chr. Michelsen Institute*, 2009, 8, 17, 18.

Fifth, given these circumstances – no comprehensive political strategy on national and subnational level; no coherent plan for how to reintegrate Taliban commanders and fighters; no clear idea of why they had joined the insurgency – those involved in financing and implementing the programme saw it as a means to achieve short-term and narrow goals.

The UK and U.S. viewed the PTS as a national security instrument used to encourage insurgents to surrender and yield intelligence, rather than reconcile. The Chr. Michelsen Institute wrote in 2009 that 'virtually all the countries' that had troops in the south of Afghanistan were 'trying to talk to actual or potential opponents at the local level'. The initiatives were, however, 'essentially tactical manoeuvres designed to protect the troops of the countries that have committed military forces to fight the insurgency'.[292]

In the provinces, local elites may have appropriated PTS resources meant for Taliban. According to a tribal elder who supported the PTS, the head of its Uruzgan office to this end compiled lists of fake Taliban. 'They registered "fake Taliban" – no one knew them. It was a total lie. In reality the PTS head was bringing his men from his own tribe. I didn't know even one of those so-called Taliban'.[293] A former employee of the PTS office in Helmand claims the same thing happened there. 'PTS was a total failure. We had fake Taliban with fake names. The Taliban did not trust us. I emphasise that the PTS was a total failure'.[294]

The issues with PTS were, therefore, not only technical but lay in the wider political order established in Afghanistan after the U.S.-led intervention in 2001. Taliban commanders' disinterest in the programme mainly resulted from the unwillingness of all their opponents to pursue a more inclusive and less predatory government, on both the national and on subnational level. Warring parties were also internally divided on the issue of how to deal with their enemy. Divisions and competition within and between the Afghan government and the international coalition meant there was no coherent approach to reintegration of either Taliban leaders and the rank and file.

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[292] Suhrke et al., "Conciliatory Approaches," 34.
[293] 201.
[294] 400.

The lack of an overarching political strategy including engagement with Taliban leaders and a clear and undisputed approach to the reintegration of the rank and file led Afghan factions and international actors in the provinces to use the PTS for short-term and narrow, often personal, goals, ranging from short-term security to pocketing money. This meant that for Taliban commanders and fighters there was very little to come home for. As a result, few did.

3.2. Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme (APRP)

After the PTS started, the insurgency expanded and adopted new tactics, such as suicide bombings and improvised explosive devices (IEDs). By 2008, the U.S. military started to request more troops to Afghanistan. In 2009 newly inaugurated U.S. President Barack Obama decided on a 'surge' of 30,000 U.S. troops, bringing their total to just over 100,000 in 2011. However, he also put a deadline on their deployment, stating they would start coming home by July 2011.

Commander of ISAF and of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, General Stanley McChristal, whose command started in June 2009, introduced a kill capture campaign in Afghanistan designed to sow 'distrust and discontent inside the ranks of insurgent groups, ultimately persuading them they have no chance of succeeding militarily'.[295] To accompany this, he thought there should be a dignified alternative for insurgents besides surrender or death or capture on the battlefield.[296] Foreign donors had long lost hope that the PTS was capable of demobilising significant numbers of Taliban and the programme was on its last legs as their funding dried up. A new programme was designed in 2009, called the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme.

At the January 2010 London Conference on Afghanistan, Western donors pledged $140 million to reintegrate 'reconcilable' insurgent commanders and their foot soldiers. The APRP, which started in June 2010, combined (at least on paper) the 'reintegration' of mid-level Taliban commanders and fighters with high-level talks,

[295] Pentagon adviser Lt. Col. John Nagle (ret.) in "Kill/Capture", PBS documentary, aired May 11, 2011, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/afghanistan-pakistan/kill-capture/transcript; 515; 507.
[296] 554.

known as ‘reconciliation’. At strategic and political levels, efforts would focus on the leadership of the insurgency. At operational level, they would be geared towards the reintegration of foot soldiers, small groups, and local leaders.

The APRP was led by the seventy-member High Peace Council (HPC), the public face of negotiations with insurgents, headed first by Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani and, after his assassination in 2011, his son. It was implemented by the same Joint Secretariat (under the Karzai administration under the direction of its chief executive officer Minister Mohammad Masoom Stanekzai), which worked on DIAG. The official APRP documents listed ISAF and UNAMA as participants in the JS to assist with information, security operations, strategic communications and government delivery down to the local level.

Provincial peace councils and technical teams to support provincial and district governors replicated this set-up in the provinces. Governors played a central role ‘in coordinating the support of line ministries with local peace and reintegration processes’.[297] The UN and ISAF (through its Force Reintegration Cell, F-RIC) were responsible for coordinating international support for the APRP, though the F-RIC was disbanded towards the end of the Karzai administration.

The programme aimed to incorporate lessons from its predecessors. Reintegration assistance was more comprehensive than that of previous programmes. APRP would offer not only provide employment to participants but also better protection, opportunities for grievance resolution for both them and the communities into which they would reintegrate – an acknowledgement that insurgents did not fight only for economic reasons as Lieutenant-General Barno had assumed at the start of the PTS[298] — and a ninety-day period of ‘de-radicalisation’.

Reintegration as described in the APRP documentation consisted of three phases. The first—social outreach, confidence building, and negotiation— involved district and

[297] National Security Council Disarmament and Reintegration Commission, “Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program (APRP): Final Program Document,” *Islamic Republic of Afghanistan*, July 12, 2010, 1, 14.
[298] 554.

provincial officials and peace council members reaching out to interested insurgents. It also involved them mediating between those insurgents and the communities into which they would reintegrate to resolve grievances that may generate violence, often referred to as 'grievance resolution'.

The second phase—demobilisation—included vetting (a review of both identity and past actions), registration (including the collection of biometric data), assessment of the individual and community, management of weaponry, protection from targeting by government or international forces, and the provision of security and transition assistance to meet basic needs ($120 monthly for three months). The individual was eligible for political amnesty if he agreed to respect the Afghan constitution and renounces violence and terrorism.

The third phase—consolidation of peace—presented demobilised combatants and communities with 'community recovery packages based on a standard needs assessment'. Options included integration into the Afghan National Security Forces, vocational and literacy training, religious mentoring, education and enrolment in a public works or agriculture conservation corps, and work on local projects.[299]

Besides offering a more comprehensive reintegration route, the main APRP's main innovation, particularly when compared with the PTS, was the reintegration track's rollout, at least on paper, in tandem with high-level negotiations with the Taliban. This could have potentially helped to create a more favourable environment for the reintegration of the rank-and-file. However, although donors, the UN and the Afghan government were more interested in pursuing peace talks than in 2005, they still disagreed over the best way to do so, including internally. As a result a clear policy was, again, absent.

Key members of the new Obama administration disagreed on overall strategy in Afghanistan, leading to bitter rivalries. The new U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Holbrooke aimed 'to midwife' a negotiated

[299] National Security Council Disarmament and Reintegration Commission, "Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program".

settlement between the Taliban, the Afghan government and the United States.[300] Obama, in a departure from his predecessor President Bush's approach, initially seemed open to negotiations. But military officials such as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen, ISAF commander General Stanley McChrystal and his successor General David Petreaus wanted first to increase the number of forces, or 'surge' – a path they were able to persuade Obama to move along – and then accept the surrender of senior Taliban, rather than talk. In the meantime they were willing to offer incentives for the rank-and-file to lay down their weapons.[301]

ISAF, which after McChrystal's dismissal in June 2010 came under command of Petreaus, and those donors funding the APRP hoped that the reintegration of low- and mid-level fighters would help convince insurgent leaders to negotiate. It would thus initially only complement the military surge, while higher-level talks with Taliban leaders would come later, though only with those who wanted to surrender.[302] In contrast, many UN and Afghan officials believed that the two tracks should run in parallel, or that the rank-and-file's reintegration should even follow talks with high-level Taliban.

One HPC member said: 'You need to start talking with high-level Taliban and only when you have their consent reintegrate lower level commanders. Reintegration before talks doesn't work. It's the wrong way to spend money'.[303] A UN official observed: 'It is very difficult to have reintegration without a peace process'. According to him ISAF's view on reintegration understood it as 'a COIN [counterinsurgency] instrument, a military-driven surrender mechanism, but not a serious mechanism to make peace'. But a senior F-RIC official defended ISAF's view: 'There is a resilient view that reintegration is bogus and that it goes against high level talking. But in Afghanistan we see the strength of reintegration. A bottom-up process has a great strength to it'.[304]

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[300] Rajiv Chandrasekaran, *Little America: The War Within the War for Afghanistan* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 222.
[301] Chandrasekaran, *Little America*, 127, 223, 224.
[302] Chandrasekaran, *Little America*, 224.
[303] 405.
[304] 516.

The APRP thus evolved based on divergent conceptions of how reintegration should relate to military and political processes. During a National Consultative Peace Jirga in early June 2010 that preceded Karzai's signing off on the APRP, major donors, especially ISAF, pressed for quick implementation of the reintegration component. 'If we don't get it going soon we will start missing the boat,' said F-RIC head Major General Philip Jones in an interview with the *New York Times* at the time. 'We have to catch this moment here in every sense'. The newspaper reported that though the reintegration plan was nominally an Afghan one, drafted by Stanekzai, it had been designed with close collaboration of ISAF officials as it was seen as a vital part of the coalition's counterinsurgency strategy.[305]

Four years later, by the end of the Karzai administration in September 2014, the APRP had around 9,000 participants.[306] Analysts, diplomats, and some donors expressed, however, concerns about its output: numbers were low; they included many non-insurgents; and most came from the north and west of the country—not the Taliban heartlands.[307] Results were particularly disappointing given that on paper the

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[305] Carlotta Gall, "Karzai Pressed to Move on Taliban Reintegration," *New York Times*, June 25, 2010.

[306] The UN Development Programme UNDP wrote in its 2014 annual report: 'According to the JS reports, 1,816 ex-combatants renounced arms and joined the peace programme in 2014, bringing the total number of reintegrees to 9,512. Of the total number of reintegrees, 871 are commanders or leaders. Transitional Assistance (TA) packages of cash assistance were distributed to 1,694 reintegrees in 2014, bringing the cumulative number of TA packages distributed to 9,320. By the end of 2014 the total number of weapons collected or registered by APRP from reintegrees was 7,332, with 1188 weapons collected in 2014'. United Nations Development Programme, "Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme (UNDP support) 2014 Annual Project Progress Report," *United Nations*, 2014.

[307] In a report on the APRP from 2011 I wrote: Around 85 per cent of the reintegrees are from northern and western provinces. The picture of their background is mixed. In Baghlan some officials say it is unclear even to those involved: "we don't know who these people are". Some groups went to the police, some to the NDS and again others knocked on the door of provincial councillors. It appears that in each case the "hosts" took care of vetting but neglected to share their findings with other parties involved in implementing APRP. (Deedee Derksen, "Peace from the Bottom-Up? The Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme," *Peace Research Institute Oslo*, September 29, 2011, 14.
Four years later, in August 2015, in the northeastern provinces Kunduz, Baghlan, Takhar and Badakhshan 2199 APRP participants were recorded against 820 in the southwestern provinces Kandahar, Helmand, Uruzgan and Zabul; the Taliban heartland. United Nations Development Programme, "UNDP Reintegrees and TA

APRP offers the most comprehensive reintegration package of all four DDR programmes, and that its design includes lessons from the others. 'We took the lessons into account and still it is not working', one diplomat said.[308]

A primary initial challenge was setting up the APRP's ambitious infrastructure. Both the HPC and the JS were established in the autumn of 2010. Setting up the peace councils and local secretariats in the provinces took much longer than anticipated, partly hindered by a slow disbursement of funds and difficulties with coordination within the APRP structure. According to one researcher:

> There is a lack of communication from the district to the provincial government, from the provincial government to the centre, from the Afghan government to ISAF, and from ISAF to the embassies. There is a total lack of transparency. Until roles are clearer, it will be a mess.[309]

The profiles of APRP officials also raised concerns. Observers and officials questioned the prominence of former mujahedeen factional leaders and the lack of neutral figures in the High Peace Council. Some of the Council's (non-mujahedeen) members agreed. 'The HPC is a compromise', said one. 'Northern Alliance groups are included because otherwise they will take up their arms. It is a very clever policy of the government. But we are not very trustable for the opposition'.[310] There were also concerns about the continuity between the sluggish administration for past DDR

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progress sheet 18-08-2015," *United Nations*, unpublished. It was widely believed, including among actors involved in the implementation of the APRP in Kabul and the provinces and among international donors, that a significant number of non-insurgents had been allowed into the APRP, with most interviewees saying that the non-insurgents greatly outnumbered the Taliban 404; 432; 341; 201; 109; 505; 515; 526; 529; 554; 539. This point of view was disputed by other Afghan and western officials 410; 411; 503. However, the provincial case studies show that most APRP participants were members of small militia, at best operating in the periphery of the insurgency.

[308] 505.

[309] Derksen, "Peace from the Bottom-Up?," 7, 11. In May 2011, the JS was still opening provincial bank accounts and setting up provincial peace councils, though this should have been finished within the first hundred days. In Kabul it took longer than anticipated for the ministries involved in APRP to recruit dedicated staff and set up 'cells' to process project proposals from the provinces.

[310] 404. On 5 November 2015 Yunus Qanoni, another former jihadi leader, was appointed as head of the HPC.

initiatives and the APRP Joint Secretariat.[311] In some places provincial and district peace councils were regarded as vehicles of patronage for local authorities rather than instruments of genuine outreach. According to a peace council head in a northern province:

> Our peace council has no-one who can talk with the Taliban. Most of its members have always opposed the Taliban. There are some Pashtuns on the council, like me. But we are there just for show; we can't talk with the Taliban.[312]

Despite these obstacles, ISAF began reintegrating insurgents from the outset under the APRP programme, at first in northern and western provinces (the first reintegration under the APRP already took place in March 2010 in Baghlan, even before Karzai signed the decree, and is described in more detail in the provincial case study).[313] 'We felt the market was there and different forms of reintegration started quickly, so we had to put instruments in place while it was being rolled out', said one ISAF officer working in the F-RIC. 'That's setting yourself up for multiple crises. It is a stumbling block. But what do you do? Do you say: come back in one and a half years? No'.[314]

However, reintegrating insurgents under the new programme before all its elements were in place led to a number of problems. First, each of the three phases of reintegration was only partially implemented, leaving little room for grievance resolution, problems with vetting, a lack of clarity regarding amnesties, no functioning database and only short-term reintegration assistance (food, clothes) available. For those who wished to participate it was unclear how to actually sign up.

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311 See for example, Patricia Gossman, "Afghan High Peace Council Fails to Reflect Afghan Civil Society," *United States Institute of Peace*, January 10, 2011. On 5 November 2015 Yunus Qanoni, another former jihadi leader, was appointed as head of the High Peace Council.
312 Derksen, "Peace from the Bottom-Up?," 12.
313 The first APRP participants were admitted in the programme as early as March 2010, but President Karzai signed the APRP document only in June, and established the HPC and the JS in September. As of May 2011 29 provincial bank accounts and 28 provincial peace councils had been established (of 34). Derksen, "Peace from the Bottom-Up?"
314 516.

One reintegrated Taliban commander from the south explained his difficulties in approaching government officials:

> I kidnapped four police and told them I would free them on the condition that they give my telephone number to a government official. I didn't hear anything after their release. Then I kidnapped two police and told them the same. Again I didn't hear anything. Then I kidnapped one police, but this time I told him that if he didn't give my telephone number to a government official I would kill his family. A few weeks later I got a call.[315]

Members of the JS and of the HPC visited several provinces, but without provincial peace councils or guidelines for governors, there was little outreach at the local level, which negatively affected the first phase of the programme. Grievance resolution was, on paper, also an important element of the first phase. But a F-RIC official acknowledged more than a year into the programme: 'We haven't seen much of it yet, absolutely. Grievance resolution is very important, but how do you formalise it? Grievance resolution is easy to say, hard to do'.

APRP's second phase, demobilisation, also suffered problems. Potential participants were often not vetted. When they were, conclusions were often not communicated to other implementing partners. The registration of participants was also limited. People who came over were afraid to use their real names; people disappeared; there were a number of different lists; more than one set of biometrics was taken; paperwork disappeared because the Afghan government took it without returning it. An official working in a northern province called it 'a mess'.[316]

The central Reintegration Tracking and Monitoring Database, which ISAF would construct and the JS would manage, was not ready in time for the start of the programme. (In a later interview in 2013 a JS official said that the database never saw the daylight and that the JS developed its own, simpler, database instead.)[317] Database problems were illustrated by the fact that ISAF officials and JS officials continued to

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315 Derksen, "Peace from the Bottom-Up?," 8.
316 510. Also 545; 506.
317 182. See also Derksen, "Peace from the Bottom-Up?"

provide different numbers on APRP participants.[318]

Complicating the vetting process was the fact that from the outset there was no agreement between F-RIC officials and the JS on who was eligible for APRP. In the programme document the APRP focused 'on local peace processes with the foot soldiers, small groups and local leaders who form the bulk of the insurgency'.[319] A F-RIC official, on the other hand, said: 'the programme is for all Afghans, not only the Taliban'. [320]

The second phase was further challenged by the fact that no clear amnesty policy was ready by the time the APRP started. The programme envisaged that reintegrating commanders and fighters were eligible for amnesty if they agreed to respect the Afghan constitution and renounce violence and terrorism. But international and Afghan officials involved in the programme seemed reluctant to engage in such a thorny issue and formulate more detailed policy. They described amnesties as a Pandora's box that could kill the programme or as an 800-pound gorilla in the room. They referred to the controversy surrounding the 2007 Amnesty Law—formally the National Reconciliation, General Amnesty, and Stability Law—which provides blanket amnesties for human rights violations during recent conflicts, as contravening Afghanistan's international commitments in treaties.[321]

The third phase, 'consolidation of peace', suffered from a lack of job opportunities for participants, due to the fact that much of the programme's infrastructure was lacking at the local level and in the main line ministries. A former international ISAF officer working on reintegration in the spring of 2011 in Kunduz said that the only form of reintegration assistance they could offer participants were cooking oil, rice, clothes,

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318 In April 2011, Western officials involved in APRP said they thought around 900 people had reintegrated, while an Afghan official also involved put the number between 1,000 and 1,500; similarly an unclassified ISAF overview from May 2011 (1,680 participants) was inconsistent with a classified overview from the Afghan government from the same month (1,809 participants). Derksen, "Peace from the Bottom-Up?"

319 National Security Council Disarmament and Reintegration Commission, "Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program," 9,10.

320 516.

321 Derksen, "Peace from the Bottom-up," 10; Derksen, "The Politics," 21.

and, in some cases, shelter.[322] In other places participants had by that time been offered jobs, 'but on a very limited scale and mostly in mine action'.[323] Moreover, participants expressed mainly interest in jobs in the security sector, not in civilian jobs, which had been the focus of the programme.[324]

Next to the programme's partial implementation, a second problem resulting from its start before all elements were in place was that ISAF instead of local peace councils assumed many reintegration responsibilities. International troops used an American National Defence Authorization Act fund of $50 million to fund short-term aid, such as food, clothes and short-term employment. This happened especially in the north, which had just seen a resurgence of Taliban activity and an influx of SOF pushing the insurgents back with the help of ISAF troops, Afghan National Security Forces and local militias. For example, an ISAF commander working on APRP in 2011 in one northern province said that they started reintegrating Taliban commanders and fighters even though no local peace council or joint secretariat had been established. 'We tried to get funding from Kabul to get them a safe house, money, projects, but we didn't receive anything. Instead we used American funds to give them rice and cooking oil'.[325]

The lead of ISAF forces reinforced perceptions that the programme was driven by international military imperatives.[326] Numerous Afghan officials and village elders said in interviews that they thought the Afghan government and the international community, who were seen as party to the conflict, would not tackle politically

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322 506.
323 Derksen, "Peace from the Bottom-Up?," 11.
324 021; 117; 121; 128; 139; 243; 314.
325 506.
326 515; 142; 143; 144; 145; 313; 316. See also Derksen, "Peace from the Bottom-Up?," 22. Scholar Marissa Quie, a former member of the APRP design and implementation teams through the JS and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), wrote: 'International intervention is necessary to promote democracy and secure peace; however, the visible presence of external actors in the funding and implementation of APRP undermines its potential to generate trust, and, by extension, possibilities for democratic promotion'. Marissa Quie, "Peace-building and democracy promotion in Afghanistan: the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme and reconciliation with the Taliban," *Democratization*, 19:3 (2012): 563.

sensitive issues.[327] Insurgents said participation in the APRP amounted to surrender. A Taliban commander in Nad-e Ali said:

> I heard about the peace process [APRP], but I don't have interest in this process. Because joining with the government, means joining to American troops. I fought around three years against of American troops, so how is it possible to join with them?[328]

Third, ISAF's lead, its insistence on proceeding with reintegration in the absence of a high level political process, and the lack of guidance and financial assistance from Kabul, alienated potential key partners, such as local government officials, tribal elders, and civil society organizations. A governor from a northern province said:

> We have promised the Taliban lots of things, like a safe house, food, work and security. But the central government has not supported us in this, so I can't deliver anything. As a result the number of Taliban interested in this programme became smaller and smaller.[329]

The governor of Kandahar, Tooryalai Weesa, after being approached by emissaries for mid-level insurgent commanders, told reporters that

> We are not prepared the way we should be. We are telling them to wait a little bit. They are looking at how we are treating them, what services we're offering them, how they are being protected. If we don't treat them well, that will leave a bad impression on other groups.[330]

Although the participation of civil society organisations was supposed to be a fundamental element of the reintegration programme, especially concerning vetting of candidates and grievance resolution with communities, there was no structure in place to enable this. Some civil society actors expressed doubts about the APRP.[331] A

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[327] 013; 109; 129; 140; 148; 200; 201; 213; 400; 412; 413; 417.
[328] 315.
[329] 416.
[330] Rajiv Chandraserkaran "Afghan government's delays hinder recruitment of Taliban defectors," *Washington Post*, May 19, 2011.
[331] 546; 529; Wazhma Frogh, "Monitoring women's participation in the implementation of Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program (APRP)," Afghanistan Women's Network pilot initiative, unpublished proposal (April, 2011); Derksen, "Peace from the Bottom-Up?"

member of the F-RIC team said in an interview: 'NGO's? They don't like us'.[332] There were also considerable doubts within the UN, especially within its political mission UNAMA, over how much it should be involved in reintegration, due to a conviction that reintegration would not be successful in the absence of broader reconciliation: 'From the very beginning when the APRP was emerging, the UN was against it', said one UN official.[333]

Many Afghan officials shared this suspicion. Several HPC members, who were supposed to provide strategic vision to the APRP, indicated in interviews they did not believe in the reintegration programme and wanted nothing to do with it.
One said:

> My personal opinion on the reintegration process is that it shouldn't take place before reconciliation [with Taliban leaders]. It can be useful after reconciliation, to settle people. Unfortunately now there is a reintegration process and it is not productive: it doesn't do anything while it will not finish the war. It will increase and prolong the war. In the context of a corrupt government we are afraid that reintegration will be business through the local authorities [in other words, local authorities committing fraud with APRP funds].[334]

Some technical problems with the reintegration programme were resolved at a later stage. By the end of the Karzai administration in September 2014 the programme's infrastructure seemed to be in place, allowing for a higher level of Afghan ownership. Research for the four case studies on Uruzgan, Helmand, Kunduz, and Baghlan in 2014 found peace councils and local secretariats up and running. A mid-term evaluation report commissioned by the UN reported in February 2013 that:

> The APRP has made noteworthy progress in developing its structures, policies and methodologies for the past 2 years, all from the ground up. APRP has established itself with a strong but as yet unrealized potential to serve all corners of Afghanistan . . .
> Because APRP is not reaching its potential, there is too little social outreach, too few armed groups joining the program, and to few

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[332] 352.
[333] 515. This was confirmed by another UN official: 529.
[334] 404. He spoke on personal title. However, the other HPC members who were interviewed shared his view 008; 415.

> communities, namely those in rural areas where insurgents wield influence, are receiving recovery projects.[335]

But despite progress in setting up the APRP infrastructure, problems with grievance resolution, amnesties, a lack of interest in civilian jobs and of buy-in from key partners remained. Few genuine Taliban seemed interested. These challenges were indicative of a structural problem. Since the programme's start until the end of the Karzai administration, the differences of opinion described above on the sequencing of mid-level commanders' and fighters' reintegration and peace talks with the Taliban leadership hindered its progress.

Western donors, most importantly the United States, publicly shifted their stance on talks, accepting their necessity, which led to meetings between U.S. officials and Taliban representatives from 2011 onwards. The Taliban also sent representatives to conferences on Afghanistan in France, Japan and Germany. In June 2013 the opening of a political office for the Taliban in Doha was meant to start direct negotiations between Taliban and representatives of the Afghan government, in addition to talks with representatives of the U.S. government. But President Karzai cancelled planned talks between members of the HPC and the Taliban in protest at the sign and the flag of the political office (which was the same as during the Taliban-ruled Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan). According to Karzai, this meant the movement pretended to be a government in waiting. Thus until President Karzai left office in September 2014 no peace process was initiated.[336]

The absence of a high-level process and the continuing war were the main obstacles for the successful reintegration of Taliban commanders and fighters, not the technical problems, which had partly been resolved by 2014. Or, as a former Taliban official

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335 "Mid-Term Evaluation Report," commissioned by the United Nations, February 2013, unpublished, executive summary.

336 Matthew Rosenberg and Alissa J. Rubin, "Taliban Step Towards Peace Talks is Hailed by U.S.," *New York Times*, June 18, 2013; "Q & A: Afghan Taliban Open Doha Office", *BBC*, June 20, 2013; "Taliban Close Qatar Office in Protest at Flag Removal," *AP*, July 9, 2013; "How Taliban Talks Have Become Deadlocked in Doha," *BBC*, July 12, 2013; Thomas Ruttig, "Pushing Open the Door to Peace; Pugwash Organises Taleban Talks in Qatar," *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, May 31, 2015.

said: 'As long as there are no negotiations with the Taliban leadership, reintegrating mid-level commanders or fighters will be ineffective'.[337] There were several reasons for this: ties of loyalty and patronage within the Taliban movement; the risk of assassination by former comrades; and the fact that underlying drivers of the insurgency remained and therefore APRP participants had to return to the same situation that had compelled them to take up arms in the first place.

According to current and former Taliban commanders and officials and experts on the insurgency, ties of loyalty and patronage within the Taliban movement made the engagement of high-level leaders a precondition for the reintegration of low-level fighters. Although men joined the insurgency for a variety of reasons, over time they became socially, financially, and ideologically integrated into the movement. Strong ties of loyalty existed between commanders and their men, and upward to the leadership.[338]

Even if loyalty wore thin, defection carried enormous risks as long as Taliban leaders were not on board. Many insurgents who laid down their weapons chose to not go through the APRP, even if that meant they received no assistance. Instead they demobilised quietly, afraid of retaliation by their former comrades, who, as the case studies show, assassinated APRP participants and their relatives in the past. For example, in Kunduz former comrades killed ex-Taliban commander Maulawi Mohammad Nabi and four of his bodyguards in Imam Sahib district on May 9, 2011. In the first year of the APRP in Kunduz, three other reintegrated commanders were killed by either Taliban or nominal pro-government militias.[339] Those who did participate often ended up in the ALP by way of protection, rather than finding a civilian job as the reintegration programme originally intended, as the case studies show. The Baghlan case study tells the story of Jumadin Kandak and Bismullah, two junior commanders who had joined the reintegration programme after temporarily fighting alongside the Taliban. They both sought to join the ALP for protection, but

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337 408.
338 Interview with Thomas Ruttig in Derksen, "Peace from the Bottom-Up", 20. 564; 404; 415; 432; 237; 312; 313; 315; 316; 324; 331.
339 026; 018. Wahidullah, "Taliban Kill Ex-Comrade in Kunduz," *Pajhwok*, May 9, 2011. Wahidullah, "Militias Hamper Peace Efforts in Kunduz," *Pajhwok*, October 10, 2011.

were denied a place. Jumadin Kandak survived, but Bismullah was assassinated in May 2014 by former Taliban comrades, according to some local sources.[340] Examples of APRP participants like Maulawi Mohammad Nabi and Bismullah, who were killed after joining the programme, obviously sent a negative signal to insurgents considering joining too.

Ties within the Taliban movement—and, in turn, its ties with the Pakistani ISI—were not the only reason that reintegrating masses of low-level fighters was difficult. Without a peace process, the insurgency's underlying drivers remained. The APRP could provide participants temporary assistance, to get them on their feet in civilian society. But only genuine political change at national level could reverse the politically exclusive character of local administrations. Because they did not have the political, economic, and military support of an established patronage network that in turn had ties in the local and national government, mid-level commanders and fighters could see no future for themselves in society.

In Uruzgan a small group around Popalzai strongman and Karzai ally Jan Mohammad and his nephew Matiullah had usurped power after 2001. They had co-opted other powerbrokers, especially from the main Achekzai tribe. However, this had still left a substantial group of commanders, tribal elders and mullahs out of the local administration, some of whom had joined the Taliban. For them to participate in the APRP without any change at the top in the local administration meant their position would again be precarious, much as before they joined the Taliban – even if they were allowed into the ALP.

In Helmand after 2001, several powerbrokers backed by SOF competed for the best government positions and for the biggest share in the drugs business. Many groups left out of local government and preyed upon by officials to relinquish their share of the drugs market had joined the Taliban. A high-level official in Helmand at the time said:

> Some of the Taliban that had peace talks with us were not sure if they would be safe after joining the peace programme [APRP] as long as people like [one

[340] 111; 114. One source did not think the Taliban was responsible for his death.161.

> of the anti-Taliban powerbrokers] was in power. These Taliban commanders raised the concern during our discussions that their life would not be secure.[341]

In Kunduz and Baghlan, the military campaigns against the Taliban after their resurgence in the northeast in 2008 and 2009 resulted in increased support, both international and from factions in the government in Kabul and locally, for strongmen and militia commanders whose predation had led many people to join the Taliban. The increased strength of their enemies in the local administrations naturally deterred Taliban commanders in Kunduz and Baghlan from participating in a reintegration programme.

This problem for local Taliban is illustrated by the story of one Taliban commander in Qal-e Zal, who will remain anonymous for security reasons. He claims he started operating as an insurgent commander in the Kunduz district Qal-e Zal having been approached by a Taliban interlocutor from Pakistan, probably around 2008 or 2009. He said he joined the armed opposition because Pashtuns in Qal-e Zal were 'oppressed and harassed' by Turkmen government officials after 2001. Prominent in this harassment, according to the Taliban commander and other locals, was local strongman Nabi Gechi, who led counterinsurgency efforts. Initially, Gechi had been paid by Turkmen communities fearful of the Taliban. But in 2011 Nabi Gechi became the first commander to be supported by the foreign-funded CIP- militia.

International support for Nabi Gechi's militia prompted the Taliban commander, who had already been approached many times by elders and local government officials to stop fighting, to join the APRP with eighteen fighters. However, with his main enemy still in place (the CIP programme stopped but Nabi Gechi and his militia still operated in the area), in a 2014 interview he said that he was disillusioned with the reintegration programme. 'They had promised that they would take care of me and my people. They also promised that they would stop the *arbakai* to harass us. They said we would get a house and other benefits. But none of those promises materialised'.[342]

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[341] 412.
[342] 021. Sudarsan Raghavan, "Afghan Government Turns to Militias as Taliban Gain Strength," *Washington Post*, October 29, 2015.

In sum, in the absence of a high-level political process resulting in a more inclusive government at national and local level the APRP offered insurgents only surrender to what was viewed as an unsavoury government – an offer that did not reflect the Taliban's strength on the battlefield. Key elements of the APRP like amnesty and grievance resolution became meaningless without a political process including Taliban leaders. In these circumstances 'reintegration' could only be superficial; as long as APRP participants had no patrons in the local and national government their position would be fragile. They would be dependent on officials whose predation had led them to join the Taliban in the first place.

Combined, these factors meant that few Taliban were interested in the APRP, which they saw as surrendering to a 'puppet' government and its international allies. 'The government should not ask the Taliban to surrender', a HPC member said in an interview. 'That is not peace. Both the Taliban and the government should compromise'.[343] Hakim Munib, the former deputy minister of Haj and Religious Affairs under President Karzai and a former Taliban official explained:

> Afghanistan needs a durable peace, which covers all the dimensions, including national, regional and international dimensions. The local dimension should also be addressed. The bulk of the Taliban movement consists of Afghan brothers with problems with the government. Their needs and concerns should be addressed.[344]

Most Taliban who did join the government did not go through the APRP, because this public route could draw attention to their defection and endanger their lives. In many places, officials used their own methods in reintegrating insurgents, who remained unregistered. In Uruzgan interviewees, including those from the peace council, agreed that the APRP had attracted fewer Taliban than informal routes, for example through tribal elders.[345] In Helmand former Governor Gulab Mangal (2008-2011) claims that he was able to persuade more Taliban to lay down their weapons informally and go

[343] 013.
[344] Derksen, "The Politics," 20.
[345] 200; 201; 224; 235.

home than through the APRP.[346]

Another informal reintegration route for defecting Taliban was to join an anti-Taliban militia. The ALP absorbed many Taliban, as did unofficial militia initiatives, including from NDS and police officials at the national and local level. In Kunduz, around three hundred Taliban reintegrated in 2010 not through the APRP but through an informal initiative of the then provincial police commander Sayed Kheili. He bought off Taliban commanders with his own money. After Kheili's assassination in 2011, these commanders and other noninsurgent militia commanders were employed in the foreign-funded CIP-militia.

Research findings in Kunduz, Baghlan, Uruzgan and Helmand indicate that only very few long-serving Taliban commanders who were entrenched in the movement joined the APRP. So who were the participants? Most seem to have belonged to small militias, some of whom had temporarily joined the Taliban or Hezb-e Islami.[347] The majority came from northern and western provinces, not the Taliban heartland.[348]

The first group of APRP participants joined in Baghlan in March 2010. They were 70 to 100 men under command of local commanders Sher and Nur-ul-Haq, who joined after losing a battle against the Taliban. They presented themselves at the time as Hezb-e Islami. Analysts, military officers and officials disagreed about their credentials – some observers claim they were pro-government forces, others believe their claims. One of the group's commanders said that Hezb-e Islami was just a name they picked when they started operating north of Pul-e Khumri. Another review found that they appeared to be concerned mainly with extorting the local population.[349]

By contrast, the main Taliban commanders in Baghlan in 2011 said they wanted nothing to do with the APRP as long as their leaders did not consent. A local mid-level Taliban commander, reportedly fighting against Sher and Nur-ul-Haq, said, 'Taliban high-ranking people will not ask me to lay down my weapons. They will

346 Derksen, "The Politics," 32.
347 See the case studies.
348 Numbers from 2011, 2013 and from 2015.
349 Derksen, "Peace from the Bottom-Up?," 14.

only do this when they are in negotiations with the government of Afghanistan and once the foreign troops leave. Then I am okay to lay down my weapons'.[350]

Most interviewees claim that the APRP has attracted few genuine insurgents and that Afghan officials use its resources for their own patronage network (putting relatives in the local secretariat, taking money that is supposed to go to community development and including followers in the programme so they can get benefits such as the possibility to join the ALP).[351]

Patronage drove the allocation of resources in the APRP on all levels, according to a mid-term evaluation in 2013.[352] Although progress was made on the demobilisation phase, intelligence gathering and assessment for vetting took place in a '"black box", hidden from scrutiny'. This opacity allowed political players to subvert the process.[353] Doubts were widespread on the extent to which local peace councils were genuinely working to reintegrate insurgents. 'Peace is business', was a recurring comment of well-informed Afghan officials and tribal elders. Many asserted that the councils' main goal was to receive funds from Kabul. Those posing as Taliban also profited.[354]

To conclude, the timing of the APRP, its design and its implementation was driven by the international military. The international military's lead, the lack of buy-in from local partners and the fact that local peace councils and other elements of the programme's infrastructure were not ready when the programme began delegitimised it from the start. Some of these problems were addressed at a later stage, as the programme became more 'Afghan owned'.

But a structural problem, one that could not be addressed within the confines of the programme itself, was the lack of high-level negotiations with Taliban leaders. Without their consent and with the war raging, prospects of surviving participation in the APRP for Taliban commanders were slim. The same officials who they had

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350 Derksen, "Peace from the Bottom-Up?"
351 404; 324; 200; 201; 236; 412; 244; 407; 425; 506; 119, amongst others.
352 UN, "Mid-Term Evaluation Report".
353 UN, "Mid-Term Evaluation Report," 6, 16.
354 412; 404; 200; 201; 236; 244; 407; 425. See also Derksen, "The Politics".

sought protection from still held power, limiting chances for durable reintegration in the civilian society or in the security forces. Key elements of the APRP such as grievance resolution, amnesty, security guarantees and employment opportunities became empty promises.

Therefore, though on paper the programme offered insurgents and their communities comprehensive reintegration opportunities, in reality it came down to an offer of surrender to a government they viewed as unsavoury; an offer that was unpalatable for most Taliban. Without genuine insurgents joining the programme, Afghan government officials used resources to provide patronage to their followers. As a result the APRP ended up strengthening the establishment; an exclusive government including officials who still used the resources to fight the Taliban to target rivals, many of whom then sought protection in the insurgency. The APRP ended up aggravating the already precarious local conditions that fuelled the insurgency; it aggravating the problem it aimed to solve.

Chapter 4 DDR in the Northeast: Kunduz and Baghlan

4.1. Background to post-2001 conflict dynamics

Kunduz and Baghlan are among the provinces with the highest overall number of participants in the DDR programmes. By the end of the Karzai administration in 2014 the failure of these programmes to genuinely demobilise and reintegrate armed men, however, was apparent in the strong insurgency, both provinces' large and fragmented informal and semi-formal security sectors and the inability of government institutions to control roaming militias. Heavy fighting in both provinces in the summer of 2014 preluded the Taliban takeover of Kunduz city a year later, which it held for two weeks.

How did it come to this? What was the impact of the DDR programmes, if any? This introduction explores conflict dynamics in both provinces before 2001 and after the fall of the Taliban in 2001 in order to show the political context in which programmes took place. The Kunduz case study then explores the career of Mir Alam, the Tajik commander of the 54th Division that was the first division in Afghanistan to participate in DDR. It also explores the insurgency and effect of the APRP. The Baghlan case study follows the career of Amir Gul, the Pashtun commander of the AMF Brigade 733, who, like Mir Alam in Kunduz, participated in both DDR and DIAG. Then it examines the impact of the APRP programme in Baghlan, where it has had one of the highest numbers of participants.

4.1.1. Pre-2001

Kunduz and Baghlan provinces are located in the northeast of Afghanistan in a fertile plain between the Amu Darya river to the north and the Hindu Kush in the south. They occupy a strategic position, connecting Kabul to Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Until 1964 they were part of the same province, which was called Kataghan and which also included Takhar. Then and now Kunduz city is the main economic, political and cultural centre of the northeast, which also includes Badakhshan.

Compared to the southwest Kunduz and Baghlan have traditionally seen more involvement from the state and a higher level of socio-economic development. A basic infrastructure for health services exists in Kunduz and Baghlan, and the overall literacy rates are respectively 33 per cent and 21 per cent (against 5 per cent for both Helmand and Uruzgan).[355]

Both provinces are mostly agrarian. Both have an abundance of fertile land. They have been major rice producers, next to wheat, cotton, melons, corn and other produces. There is a large amount of transit trade, and both provinces are on trafficking routes for the country's opium. The area has also profited from industrialisation drives in the 20th century, which led to the establishment of several factories producing goods, including sugar, cement, textile and cotton.[356]

Between the 1850s and early 1970s several immigration waves changed the demography of Kataghan, which before then had been thinly populated by mostly Uzbeks, Tajiks, Arabs and, in smaller numbers, Turkmen, Hazara and Aimaq. Pashtuns are now the largest ethnic group in Kunduz, and the second largest in Baghlan after settling there in several phases; in some cases voluntarily, in other cases forced by the government in the context of Pashtunisation policies. Repeated immigration waves (which also included non-Pashtun settlers, most notably in the 1920s when Tajiks and Uzbeks fled to Afghanistan after the Soviet conquest of their homelands) triggered many of the area's long running conflicts over land, water and political representation, which continue today.[357]

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[355] Provincial profiles Afghanistan available at http://www.foodsecurityatlas.org (accessed 12 August 2014).
[356] Nils Wörmer, "The Networks of Kunduz: A History of Conflict and Their Actors, from 1992 to 2001," *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, 2012.
[357] Wörmer, "The Networks of Kunduz," 7, 8; Lawrence Devlin et al.,"Conflict Analysis: Kunduz City, Kunduz Province," *Cooperation for Peace and Unity*, 2009, 5, 6. On the Pashtunization policies of Amir Rahman Khan's reign in Afghanistan (1880-1901) and his successors until 1979 (the Afghan government using Pashtun nationalist ideology, land confiscation, discriminatory taxation policies and forced resettlement that favoured the Pashtuns) see Christian Bleuer, "State-building, migration and economic development on the frontiers of northern Afghanistan and southern Tajikistan," *Journal of Earasian Studies* 3 (2012): 69-79.

The competition over resources and political representation in the 19th century pitted Pashtuns against all others in the north, resulting in an informal alliance of Persian and Turkic speakers against Pashtu speakers. The former 'felt threatened by the Pashtun immigrants not just because of the loss of their best agricultural lands, but also because the Pashtuns represented a tool for further control by the central government', according to Christian Bleuer.[358] This anti-Pashtun sentiment in the northeast, which was further fuelled under the Taliban regime in the second half of the 1990s, would come to play a major role in the rise of the insurgency in Kunduz and Baghlan in the second half of the 2000s.

The 1970s and 1980s saw the emergence of commanders mobilising solidarity networks or *qaums* under the banner of various jihadi parties operating in this area. According to Rubin, by 1988, main jihadi parties in the northeast were Jamiat and Hezb-e Islami, with respectively 55 per cent and 25 per cent of the mujahedeen in the northeast thought to be affiliated with these two parties.[359] Hezb-e Islami, led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar (born in Kunduz district Imam Sahib), had a strong base in Pashtun dominated areas. Professor Buhanuddin Rabbani's led Jamiat included a high number of educated Tajiks, Uzbeks and Turkmens. Like the pro-government parties, however, mujahedeen parties were generally multi-ethnic and party choice was mostly 'based on local identity and family affiliation rather than broader ethnic identity'.[360] Mobilisation occurred within an existing *qaum* or, alternatively, a commander mobilised several *qaums*.[361]

Despite the ideological agendas of the mujahedeen parties, relations between local commanders and parties did not depend primarily on ideological identification, but on

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[358] Bleuer, "State-building," 69-79.
[359] Rubin, *The Fragmentation*, 200. The parties operating in this area included Jamiat-e Islami-ye Afghanistan (Islamic Society of Afghanistan)/Shura-ye Nazar, Hezb-e Wahdat- Islami (Islamic Unity Party), Ittehad-e Islami bara –ye Azadi-ye Afghanistan (Islamic Union for the Liberation of Afghanistan), Harakat-e Inqilab (Islamic Revolution Movement), Hezb-e Islami-ye Afghanistan (with one faction led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and another by Maulawi Ynus Khalis) and others. In 1992 former PDPA officer General Dostum established Jombesh-e Melli Islami-ye Afghanistan (National Islamic Movement of Afghanistan).
[360] Bhatia and Sedra. *Afghanistan, Arms and Conflict*, 252.
[361] Dorronsoro, *Revolution Unending,* 93, 109.

access to resources from abroad, according to Giles Dorronsoro. He argues that non-material issues also played a role. Party affiliation provided protection and legitimacy in relation to other groups. Parties' continuous striving to maintain their clientele stifled party discipline. Parties never succeeded in leaving behind the disunity between leaderships and commanders, and were therefore coalitions of commanders. Commanders switching parties was common. Their fighters (*andiwal*) usually went with them.[362]

The fighting between Jamiat and Hezb-e Islami, which had started during the anti-Soviet jihad, worsened during the civil war (1992-1996). The provinces experienced an increasing fragmentation of military control between commanders, including not only those of Jamiat and Hezb-e Islami but also Sayyaf's Ittehad-al Islami and General Dostum's Junbesh-e Milli. In Baghlan Ismaeli militias that had been previously allied with the communist party also played a major role during the civil war. By the mid-1990s, Hezb-e Islami's influence had weakened.[363]

The Taliban's gained control in Baghlan and Kunduz by winning support among Pashtuns and by exploiting provincial-level divisions to persuade local commanders to defect. Many Hezb-e Islami commanders joined them; most prominently commander Bashir Baghlani (with his sub-commander Amir Gul) in Baghlan in 1998. These defections allowed the Taliban to infiltrate and then capture Kunduz. Several powerful Junbesh, Jamiat, Ittehad and Mahaz-e Melli commanders also entered into deals with the Taliban. Ethnicity played a role, as many of these commanders were Pashtun. For example, in Kunduz the main Jamiat commander and important Pashtun powerbroker Aref Khan joined the Taliban (allowing the Tajik Mir Alam to become the main Kunduz Jamiat commander). The Uzbek Hezb-e Islami commander Amir Abdul Latif Ibrahimi on the other hand first joined the Taliban but then switched back to Massoud's forces.[364]

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362 Dorronsoro, *Revolution Unending*, 148.
363 Devlin et al., "Conflict Analysis," 6; Wörmer, "The Networks of Kunduz," 21.
364 Devlin et al., "Conflict Analysis", 7; Bhatia and Sedra, *Afghanistan, Arms and Conflict*, 254; Wörmer, "The Networks of Kunduz," 11; Philipp Münch, "Local Afghan Power Structures and the International Military Intervention: A Review of Developments in Badakhshan and Kunduz provinces", *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, 2013, 12.

Ethnically heterogeneous militias quickly became mainly Pashtun upon joining the Taliban. Amir Gul's force (he replaced Bashir Baghlani when Baghlani was arrested by the Taliban) initially included many different ethnicities. With the arrival of the Taliban, however, he reorganised his force around Pashtuns. Pashtuns also dominated the local administrations in Kunduz and Baghlan, replacing Tajik and Uzbek officials. 'The Taliban did not care about former affiliations as long as a person was Pashtun', writes Nils Wormer.[365] The opposite happened on the opposing side; the threat from the Taliban was an incentive to form multi-ethnic alliances. Bhatia and Sedra write: 'Rumours of Taliban atrocities, often relayed by the internally displaced, induced mass combatant mobilisation for village protection from the Taliban'.[366]

4.1.2. Post-2001

Kunduz City was the last place in the north to fall to the Northern Alliance in November 2001. The Battle for Kunduz (Kunduz City was encircled for eleven days between 13 and 24 November) was characterised by Jamiat-Junbesh rivalry. After Ahmad Shah Massoud's assassination on 9 September 2001, two days before the attacks on the Twin Towers in New York, Fahim, Massoud's former intelligence chief, became the military leader of Jamiat's forces. Jamiat commanders under General Daud Daud competed with General Dostum's Junbesh militias to enter Kunduz City first, and similar Jamiat-Junbesh competition played out in Baghlan's provincial capital Pul-i-Khumri and other provincial capitals in the north.[367]

The Jamiat-Junbesh rivalry also manifested itself in competing tracks of negotiation with the Taliban who were trapped in Kunduz (the total strength of the Taliban forces and their foreign allies, including Pakistani militants, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and al-Qaeda, was estimated at between 8,000 and 12,000 fighters). Finally a deal was reached on 22 November at Dostum's headquarters in the Qala-ye

365 Wörmer, "The Networks of Kunduz"; Bhatia and Sedra, *Afghanistan, Arms and Conflict*, 255.
366 Bhatia and Sedra, *Afghanistan, Arms and Conflict*, 255.
367 Wörmer, "The Networks of Kunduz," 38; Antonio Giustozzi, *Empires of Mud, War and Warlords in Afghanistan*, (London: Hurst, 2009), 117; Devlin et al., "Conflict Analysis".

Jangi fortress close to Mazar-i-Sharif.[368] The Taliban surrendered on 24 and 25 November and on 26 November General Daud's forces occupied the city center. Some prominent Taliban commanders escaped (including Mullahs Beradar and Daudullah); others were taken to Guantanamo, and others were killed in a helicopter crash together with a number of local mid-level commanders. Most Taliban foot soldiers (an estimated 3,000 to 4,000 fighters had held out) were taken prisoner by Dostum's forces and part of this group perished in the 'convoy of death'.[369]

The international intervention reversed the power balance between the Pashtun powerbrokers who had ruled under the Taliban time and those who had been in charge before. The mainly non-Pashtun victors distributed top positions in the local administration amongst themselves. While the former jihadi parties had previously been ethnically heterogeneous, by contrast under the Karzai administration they became more ethnically homogenous (a trend that the DDR process, explored below, would deepen). Tajiks filled the top positions occupied by Jamiat, Uzbeks those by Junbesh and Pashtuns those by Hezb-e Islami, Ittehad-e Islami and Afghan Millat.

Most security positions went to Jamiat, which was facilitated by Shura-ye Nazar members in top positions in the MoI and the MoD. General Daud Daud was appointed as the head of 6th Corps of AMF in the northeast. In Kunduz Mir Alam became the commander of the 54th Division, and in Baghlan Mustafa Mohseni became the commander of the 20th Division.

Hezb-e Islami commander Amir Gul, who had been affiliated with the Taliban, quickly switched to Jamiat as the international intervention was underway, and was

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[368] Some time before this agreement was reached the Pakistani air force had evacuated around 1,000 people, among them not only foreign fighters but reportedly also several hundred ISI and Frontier Corps officers. While the Northern Alliance promised to not kill Afghan Taliban if they defected to their side, they did not extend this offer to the foreigners. Wörmer, "The Networks of Kunduz," 40.

[369] The New York Times wrote in 2009: 'A recently declassified 2002 State Department intelligence report states that one source, whose identity is redacted, concluded that about 1,500 Taliban prisoners died. Estimates from other witnesses or human rights groups range from several hundred to several thousand. The report also says that several Afghan witnesses were later tortured or killed'. James Risen, "U.S. Inaction Seen After Taliban P.O.W.'s Died," *New York Times*, July 10, 2009; Wörmer, "The Networks of Kunduz," 2,3, 38-40.

subsequently appointed as commander of the AMF Brigade 733 in Baghlan. This was typical for the security sector's set-up in Kunduz and Baghlan: Pashtun commanders who played their cards right like Amir Gul, whose defection had enabled Jamiat to enter Kunduz from his home district Baghlan-e Jadid, – mirroring Amir Gul's former boss Bashir Baghlani's switch to the Taliban in 1998, enabling them to infiltrate Kunduz – could win appointments, but only in subordinate positions to non-Pashtuns.[370]

The political marginalisation of Pashtun powerbrokers and harassment of Pashtun communities by non-Pashtun militias and officials is cited widely by interviewees as one of the main causes of instability during the Karzai years and a driving force of the growing insurgency in the 2000s. A tribal elder from Kunduz, recalls how revenge was taken on the Pashtuns in 2001. 'Everyone was looking at the Pashtuns as Taliban'.[371] Human Rights Watch found evidence of killings, sexual violence, beatings, extortion, and looting in Pashtun villages in the north in 2002. In 2004 it warned of pre-election violence by security forces affiliated with Jamiat, Junbesh and Hezb-e Wahdat. Over 50,000 Pashtuns were estimated to have fled and were living in the south.[372]

Pashtun communities had few representatives in the provincial government they could turn to when under pressure. 'Go to Kunduz and see who is in the key positions, and how many are Pashtuns', said one official in Kabul. 'Among the district governors, police chiefs and other officials you may find maybe two Pashtuns in key positions, but those Pashtuns are weak ones'.[373] Pashtuns in leadership positions had to get the approval of Shura-ye Nazar, according to a tribal elder. The political marginalisation and abuse by non-Pashtun officials drove many Pashtun communities in the arms of

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370 A high-ranking member of the Shura-ye Nazar faction said about the defection of Amir Gul 'He was a Pashtun and as we went on to Kunduz to fight the Taliban it looked good to have someone like him on our side'. 428; Münch, "Local Afghan Power Structures," 14.
371 013. Other interviewees who talked about Pashtun marginalisation were 407; 018; 026; 020; 002; 007; 422.
372 HRW, "Paying for the Taliban's Crimes," 1; Devlin et al., "Conflict Analysis"; Münch, "Local Afghan Power Structures," 14, 15; Jon Lee Anderson, "The Fall Of Kunduz," *New Yorker*, October 6, 2015.
373 407.

the Taliban. 'The Taliban include different ethnic groups like Uzbeks and Tajiks, but the local support mainly comes from Pashtuns if I am honest with you'.[374]

A second cause of instability under both Karzai administrations that played into the hands of the resurgent Taliban in the second half of the 2000s was the rivalry between local officials with links to factions in Kabul, leading to a very weak provincial government. With Shura-ye Nazar exercising significant influence over the security apparatus in Kunduz and Baghlan, Karzai, as a Pashtun president, tried pushing back by appointing proxies in government positions, usually Pashtuns from Hezb-e Islami or Sayyaf's party Ittehad. This challenged Shura-ye Nazar but never succeeding in turning the tables. The competing local factions worked to undermine each other on important dossiers like the disarmament of illegal militias. Factional infighting badly affected the provincial government's effectiveness.

A third cause of instability was that the main factions, in Kabul and in the provincial governments in Kunduz and Baghlan, supported local militias to further their cause. A key moment, for example, was during preparations for the 2009 presidential elections, which coincided with the Taliban resurgence. Political factions used international and Afghan government funding for the anti-Taliban campaign to support loyal militia commanders. Shura-ye Nazar was again successful in this but other factions were in on it too. Some of these militias were illegal and others were part of official programmes, like the ALP. Discontent with the often-predatory militias became widespread, and also played in the hands of the Taliban, who in many places were seen as less predatory and violent than the militias.[375]

4.2. Kunduz Province

4.2.1. DDR and DIAG – the case of Mir Alam

Tajik commander Mir Alam's appointment in 2001 as commander of the 54th Division of the AMF typified the beginning of Jamiat's post-Taliban dominance of the Kunduz security sector. The AMF sub-commanders he appointed to districts were mostly Jamiatis, though some had not previously fought under his command. In the

[374] 013.
[375] 011; 012; 013; 022; 023; 024; 026.

54th division headquarters in Kunduz City, however, Mir Alam appointed loyal sub-commanders who had fought alongside him in the jihad against the Soviets and had stayed with him over the past decades of war.[376]

Mir Alam is Tajik, born around 1953 in Kunduz City, the son of a local dignitary. He trained as a mechanic. After joining the jihad in 1978 at he first fought for other jihadi parties including Harakat-e Inqilab, but in 1989 switched to the Shura-ye Nazar faction of Jamiat when he could not 'receive enough weapons from abroad' (a common reason for commanders to switch, as explored above). By 1992 he was 'one of the key Mujahideen commanders who implement the strategy of the council [Supervisory Council or Shura-ye Nazar] in Kunduz', according to a profile in AFGHANews, a newspaper published by Jamiat.[377]

Though the 1992 profile is flattering, according to other sources Ahmad Shah Massoud did not like Mir Alam, suspecting him of involvement in drugs trafficking and having many 'ghost soldiers'.[378] Mir Alam became Shura-ye Nazar's most important commander in Kunduz by default, after the defection of Jamiat commander Aref Khan to the Taliban in the second half of the 1990s. The province was not a traditional stronghold of Shura-ye-Nazar like the Panjshir Valley, and Mir Alam had a strong local network. This was also a key consideration of the Jamiat top command when it appointed him to command the 54th Division in 2001. In the words of a former official and high-ranking Jamiati, 'there was no alternative'.[379]

For Mir Alam, who had made his career on the battlefield and had a strong local base but lacked the respect of Shura-ye Nazar leaders in Kabul, the DDR process was especially threatening. In 2003, Kunduz was a 'relatively benign area', so the 54th was the first unit nationwide to be targeted by DDR.[380] Mir Alam's immediate question to visiting ANBP officials was whether only AMF commanders would disarm. For him,

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376 016; 026; 010.
377 "Who is who in the Mujahideen: Commander Mir Alam," *AFGHANews*, April 15, 1992.
378 428; Münch, "Local Afghan Power Structures". Ghost soldiers are fighters that only exist on paper but that someone claims resources for.
379 428.
380 547.

this was a crucial question. Control over men and (even more importantly) weapons were his most important assets against rivals, both those from other former jihadi parties, but also those within Jamiat.[381]

Many interviewees speak of tensions between Mir Alam and his boss General Daud Daud, the Tajik commander of the 6th Corps in the northeast, who was sixteen years younger, spoke some English, had little experience on the battlefield, but was well liked by foreign powers. In addition he had the credentials of having been a close confidante of Ahmad Shah Massoud. Once it was clear that the 6th Corps would participate first in the DDR process, General Daud Daud fought tooth and nail against the disarmament of the 6th Corps headquarters in Kunduz City. He showed little resistance, however, to the disarmament of the 54th Division of his rival Mir Alam (who appeared to visiting UN officials to see the writing on the wall and resign himself to his fate). In reality, DDR was much less of a threat for Daud than for Mir Alam. Daud's close ties to the Shura-ye Nazar faction in Kabul meant he became the deputy minister for counter narcotics at the MoI, despite allegations that he was involved in the drugs trade. He left behind Mir Alam, whose ties to Shura-ye Nazar in Kabul were weaker, in Kunduz to face the music.[382]

DDR in Kunduz started on 21 October 2003. In the first three days, 982 ex-combatants handed in 901 functioning weapons, according to the official statistics. They paraded past President Karzai during the official launch of the ANBP on 24 October. Present too were Defense Minister Fahim, Vice-President Khalili and the UN's Senior Representative of the Secretary-General Lakhdar Brahimi.[383]

Despite the high-level attendance – one former DDR official observed that it seemed the VIPs' bodyguards had more weapons than were being surrendered – it was unclear who those parading were. The headquarters of the 54th in Kunduz was 'quite

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381 512.

382 General Daud Daud was killed in May 2011 by a Taliban suicide attack. Ray Rivera, "Taliban Suicide Attack Kills Key Police Official," *The New York Times*, May 28, 2011; 312; 353; Graeme Smith, "Afghan Officials in Drug Trade Cut Deals Across Enemy Lines," *Globe and Mail*, March 21, 2009.

383 Afghanistan's New Beginnings Programme, "Consolidated Progress Report #4," *United Nations*, October 2003. See also Derksen, "The Politics".

empty' before the process, according to an observer who had visited in spring of that year.[384] After the Taliban's ouster from Kunduz many of the 54th Division's foot soldiers, though they remained on the payroll, had gone home. 'There was no army', says a former high-level DDR official. 'What were we disarming? A group of Afghan farmers who had been called to arms and since the fighting had gone back to farming. There was no certainty on who we were disarming'.[385]

While foot soldiers returned to a life of farming and General Daud secured an attractive new government position (much like other corps commanders in the north and west, including Atta Mohammad Noor and Ismael Khan), the implications of the DDR process for Mir Alam and his sub-commanders were potentially disastrous. He hoped to be provincial police chief but another Jamiat commander, Motaleb Beg, an Uzbek, was appointed instead. Mir Alam handed a list of armaments to DDR officials that included only part of his arsenal. He kept secret weapons depots and maintained contact with his men, some of whom became illegal militias and some of whom he was able to move into Kunduz' security forces. He made sure that only rival commanders were disarmed. In other words, he mirrored locally exactly what General Daud had done to him.[386]

In sum, as explored in the first chapter, the DDR programme in Kunduz, the first province to go through the process, led to the appointment of the best-connected AMF commander to an attractive government position, while the lowest and weakest commanders were disarmed. Between them was provincial-level commander Mir Alam, who did not have the right connections to obtain a government position but was too powerful to be disarmed. He kept his weapons while moving the remainder of his network, his most trusted commanders, underground. The DDR process just made his network informal, while eliminating any control the central government may have had over it previously. Not only did DDR lead to the growth, overnight, of illegal militias, it also increased informal powerbrokers' influence on the local government. In Kunduz Mir Alam gained influence over the local administration by moving some of

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384 514.
385 512; 547; 514.
386 001; 016; Francoise Chipaux, "L'Afghanistan Sous le Joug des Milices," *Le Monde*, September 15, 2004.

his followers into the security forces. As Philipp Münch notes by 2004 only 10 per cent of Kunduz's 400 police officers were professionally trained, while none of the lower ranks were.[387]

The DDR process also turned Mir Alam, like other former jihadi commanders who failed to obtain a government position, against the Karzai government. 'Holding an official position in Kunduz province is regarded by the elites as a guarantee of power and as an important material as well as symbolic resource', according to Conrad Schetter et al.[388] Powerbrokers' failure to obtain a government position can potentially contribute to instability, especially if the powerbroker in question is still armed as a result of an unsuccessful DDR programme. '(W)arlords who are not holding an office, regularly bring them[selves] to the attention of the public – often by the conscious use of violence and by fighting rivals, who do hold an office'.[389] Mir Alam indeed seems to have pursued a tactic of deliberate destabilisation as a show of strength (just like Jan Mohammad in Uruzgan and in Helmand Sher Mohammad Akhunzada, Abdul Rahman Jan and Malem Mir Wali whose examples are explored below). Thus, for example, his fighters clashed with those of Motaleb Beg over an appointment that was not to Mir Alam's liking.[390]

President Karzai appointed Mir Alam to become the Baghlan police commander in June 2005. He had to hand over a cache of 765 weapons plus ammunition to Motaleb Beg as part of DIAG. The police chief position gave him a stake in the drugs routes passing through Baghlan, according to western officials. As mentioned earlier, many

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387 001; 016. Münch, "Local Afghan Power Structures," 21. See also Derksen, "The Politics".
388 Conrad Schetter, Rainer Glassner, and Masood Karokhail, "Beyond Warlordism: The Local Security Architecture in Afghanistan," *Journal for International Relations and Global Trends* 2 (2007): 137-152.
389 Conrad Schetter, Rainer Glassner, "Neither Functioning, nor Failing of the State! Seeing Violence in Afghanistan from Local Perspectives," *Arbeitgemeinschaft Afghanistan*, 2009.
390 427; 005; 006. See also Schetter and Glassner, "Neither Functioning, nor Failing of the State!"

former AMF commanders like Mir Alam ended up in the police through patronage, usually with their militias and command structures intact.[391]

In 2007 Mir Alam was fired as part of a police reform process, according to the U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan having used his position 'to engage in a broad range of criminal activity, including extortion, bribery and drug trafficking'.[392] He returned to Kunduz, unemployed. His fortunes changed again in May 2007. As part of DIAG, he handed in the largest number of weapons (900) of all local Kunduz commanders, probably to show to the German PRT that he could be a trustworthy partner. This came two days after a heavy attack on foreign forces in Kunduz.[393]

Until then the German PRT had little time for him. After the attack, however, and as the insurgency in Kunduz expanded, Mir Alam became a local intelligence source for German and American military forces. German attempts to recover weapons he had retained during DDR and DIAG yielded limited results. An operation to uncover Mir Alam's suspected weapons depots in the Siah Ab area of Kunduz district failed, for example, perhaps because, following the official rules, foreign troops cooperated with the local NDS chief, who was a friend of Mir Alam.[394]

The fight against the Taliban marked a new and profitable phase for former 54th Division commanders and other commanders connected to Mir Alam, many of whom Tajik, like Mir Alam, or Uzbek. DDR programmes and police reform had excluded them from government positions, while not disarming them or offering them alternatives to operating as illegal militias and profiting from the illicit economy. Now

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391 Münch, "Local Afghan Power Structures," 22; U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan, "Kunduz Politics of Corruption in Baghlan Police Force," U.S. Embassy Cable 05KABUL5181, December 20, 2005. Published by *Wikileaks.org*.
392 U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan, "New Police Chiefs Raise Hopes For Fundamental Improvements in Northeast," U.S. Embassy Cable 06KABUL2861, June 25, 2006. Published by *Wikileaks.org*. Mir Alam's sacking as Baghlan police commander might have been related to a drugs raid of his compound in Kunduz by the National Interdiction Unit of the MoI in January 2007; 006.
393 010; Münch, "Local Afghan Power Structures and the International Military Intervention," *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, 29; see also Derksen, "The Politics".
394 Münch, "Local Afghan Power Structures," 29; see also Derksen, "The Politics".

rather than incorporating militias in the Afghan security forces to fight the Taliban, they were supported while continuing to operate illegally.

In July 2009, a month before the presidential elections, Kunduz provincial governor Engineer Omar, asked the NDS to recruit and support local militias, or *arbakai*, to stem the insurgency's rise and help secure the vote in Imam Saheb, Khanabad and Qal-e Zal districts. The NDS programme was headed by Mir Alam's brother-in-law, General Mohammad Daud, and initially Mir Alam became its chief beneficiary. Later other commanders with ties to political patrons in Kabul also benefited. President Karzai, Jamiati powerbrokers and others vied for influence by giving or withholding support to local militias – similar to the competition in Kabul about the appointments in the local administration. The *arbakai* were the most successful militia initiative in pushing back the Taliban in Kunduz in 2009.[395]

The insurgency's growth in Kunduz and efforts to counter the Taliban by arming militias coincided with the political comeback of Fahim. In the northeast Fahim used his long time clients Mir Alam and other former jihadi commanders, like the Pashtun powerbroker Amir Gul in Baghlan (see below), to strengthen his own position. This familiar tactic of presenting himself as a key actor in the stabilisation – or, alternatively, the destabilisation – of the northeast is presumably at least part of the reason why he was included as vice-presidential candidate on Karzai's ticket. Sources in Kabul and Kunduz (tribal elders and Afghan officials), confirm that until Fahim died in February 2014, he was Mir Alam's main patron.[396]

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[395] 022; 024; 007; 011. See also Derksen, "The Politics".

[396] In a September 2008 interview with the author in Kabul, less than a year before he became vice-president, Fahim expressed his dissatisfaction with the ousting of the 'mujahedeen' from the army in 2004, and said he would support an initiative of former jihadi commanders in the northeast who had gone through the DDR process to take up weapons against the Taliban (former jihadi commanders who had gone through DDR had told the author about this initiative during a visit to Takhar earlier in September 2008). During the interview Fahim expressed anger with the Karzai administration, saying the 'mujahedeen' were against the government and for this rearmament initiative they wanted to work with their own 'system, strategy and ideology'. However, he also added that if they were given 'high positions' after the 2009 elections they could work with the government. Therefore, his support for the initiative seems to have been at least partly informed by electoral considerations, and appears to have followed the logic also encountered at the local level (see the other case studies) that actors (threaten to) cause insecurity if they are not part of the

Bismullah Khan, Fahim's former chief of staff during his time as Defense Minister, became the minister of interior in 2010; General Daud Daud, another Tajik, returned as the 303rd Pamir Zone commander to the north for the ANP and General Abdul Rahman Sayed Kheili from the Shura-ye Nazar stronghold of Shomali became the provincial police commander in Kunduz. He paid commanders out of his own pocket, including defecting Taliban, to fight alongside him in Gore Tepa, Imam Saheb, Dasht-e Archi and Chahar Dara districts. After Daud Daud's assassination in March 2011 these commanders were integrated in the German-led CIP. Bismullah allotted Kunduz 1,125 ALP positions, which Sayed Kheili used to 'establish a clientele' of mostly non-Pashtun commanders.[397] In sum, the fight against the Taliban and the rearmament of militias in northern Afghanistan strengthened the Shura-ye Nazar powerbrokers that the first DDR programme had aimed to weaken.[398]

U.S. Ambassador Karl Eikenberry followed the proliferation of militias in Kunduz with concern.

> Beyond reversing even the limited progress toward disarmament made under DDR (Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration) and DIAG (Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups) programs, the implications of supporting local militias to combat the insurgency are both complex and uncertain. In many cases, these militias are likely considerably stronger than the under-staffed and under-equipped police, which puts the official assertion of MoI/ANP control over the militias in doubt.[399]

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government. Fahim's positioning came at a time when Karzai became increasingly estranged from the U.S. government, which had been a main actor in the dismissal of Fahim as defense minister in 2004. In contrast to five years earlier Karzai will have felt less inclined to follow donors' objections. Derksen, "The Politics".
013; 407; 506; 022; 008; 010; 025.

[397] Münch, "Local Afghan Power Structures," 40; in 2012 the majority of ALP commanders was non-Pashtun.

[398] This is confirmed by all interviewees; 506.

[399] U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan,"Unconventional Security Forces – What's Out There," U.S. Embassy Cable ID 09KABUL 3661, November 12, 2009. Published by *Wikileaks.org*. See also U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan, "Kunduz Authorities Turn to Militias as Security Deteriorates," Reference ID KABUL093366, October 19, 2009. Published by *Wikileaks.org*.

He noted that while Mir Alam claimed that his 500-man militia was controlled by the NDS 'he maintains operational control of the force and distributes its pay… Mir Alam's Kunduz militia – ethnically divisive, controlled by one man, grounded in contempt for DIAG and the rule of law – exemplifies a quick fix with dangerous implications: tactical gains at strategic cost'.[400]

Despite Eikenberry's concerns, the short-term considerations of political patrons in Kabul wanting to expand their influence in Kunduz against rivals and of foreign forces seeking quick results against the Taliban continued to be prioritised. They resulted in Mir Alam becoming the main powerbroker in Kunduz through their support – in both the informal and the formal political order. The core of Mir Alam's informal network of illegal militia commanders, included twenty to thirty of his 'bodyguards', had served with him in the 54th division, with some even serving with him in the anti-Soviet jihad – showing the failure of DDR to disrupt the command structure.[401]

He provided the militias with money, weapons and ammunition according to sources. A former government official said: 'He still has a lot of weapons in storage'.[402] The central government had little grip on Mir Alam's expanding network. He appears by this time to have considered it an advantage to keep loyalists as informal militias. Although some of the commanders that were recruited into the ALP from November 2010 onwards – a process in which SOF were involved – were reportedly connected to him, according to several sources he preferred to keep most of his men operating as *arbakai* so as to have more freedom.[403]

Mir Alam had no formal government position. But according to most sources his ties to Fahim gave him a great deal of influence on local appointments. For example, when Mir Alam learned of Police Chief's Samiullah Qatra intention to arrest militia

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400 U.S. Embassy Cable. "Unconventional security forces"; U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan, "Kunduz Authorities Turn to Militias".
401 001; 005; 007; 024.
402 022.
403 557; 506; 023. The NATO Special Operations Component Command - Afghanistan (NSOCC-A), which oversees the ALP, was approached for an interview, but this was declined. See also Derksen, "The Politics".

commanders Qadirak and Faizak for the killings in the village of Kanam-e Kalan in 2012 (examined below), he reportedly requested Fahim to intervene. A few days later Qatra was fired. When his deputy chief of police, Ghulam Farhad, moved to arrest the two commanders he was also sacked, although there could also be other reasons for his firing.

More than a year later, in November 2013, the Police Chief Khalil Andarabi was replaced with Mir Alam's ally Mustafa Mohseni. The reason may have been Andarabi's use of predatory illegal militias and ALP in anti-Taliban operations. It may, however, have also been because Andarabi was a rival of Mir Alam from his time as a police chief in Baghlan, and had made several appointments in the provincial security apparatus that were unfavourable to Mir Alam, including in the Kanam area of Kunduz City, which Mir Alam saw as his sphere of influence. Many sources claimed that Fahim and Mir Alam pushed Khalil Andarabi out with an eye to the 2014 presidential elections.[404]

Two examples of violence generated by commanders with ties to Mir Alam show how, by the end of the Karzai administration, the central government had in 2014 no more control – actually probably less – over Mir Alam and his commanders than before DDR and DIAG. In one incident on 2 September 2012 twelve civilians were killed in a raid on the predominantly Pashtun village of Kanam-e-Kalan northeast of Kunduz City – a revenge attack for the killing of a militia member. The raid was reportedly carried out by Qadirak and Faizak, two commanders with ties to Mir Alam. Afghan officials trying to investigate, arrest or disarm Mir Alam's sub-commanders after these incidents claim to have received phone calls from then Vice-President Fahim ordering them to stop.[405] As explored above Mir Alam's ties to Fahim also seems to have led to the dismissal of officials wanting to arrest the two commanders. A government commission sent by President Karzai to investigate the Kanam incident concluded:

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[404] 552; 005; 008; 009; Lola Cecchinel, "The End of a Police Chief: Factional rivalries and pre-election power struggles in Kunduz," *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, January 31, 2014.
[405] 179; 008; 009; 012; 014; 015; 025; 518. See also HRW, "Tomorrow We Shall All Die," *Human Rights Watch*, March 3, 2015.

> Mir Alam Khan is one of the influential irresponsible armed commanders in Kunduz. The Kunduz officials should have disarmed his irresponsible armed men (…) or his men should have been recruited into the ALP. As has been seen, these measures have not been taken.[406]

The commission summoned Mir Alam to ask him questions about the incident but 'he avoided to come for clarification'. Qadirak and Faizak remained free and kept operating as militia commanders. In early August 2014, however, Qadirak was killed by the Taliban in Kanam.[407]

Another example was Khanabad, an ethnically mixed district, where the largest group is Pashtun. It was another main area of Mir Alam's influence and extremely insecure. The district saw an enormous proliferation of militias after 2009. Afghan government officials estimated that by the end of the Karzai administration there were around 2,300 members of illegal armed groups (or 'irresponsible armed groups', as they are locally known). About half were connected to Mir Alam, according to local sources. Those connected to him came from all ethnic groups but were mostly Tajiks, Aimaqs and Uzbeks and usually operated in groups from five to fifteen men.[408]

The illegal armed groups carved out mini-fiefs. One of their main sources of income, next to robbery, kidnapping and drugs smuggling, was the taxation of villagers. 'If people don't pay the illegal armed groups they are expelled from their village', said one government official. 'They have no other option than to pay'.[409] The militias also dominated village life in other ways. Villagers had to ask permission to local commanders for most major transactions, including for marrying off their daughters. The militias recruited boys by force, in some cases even exploiting them as sex

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[406] Final report from the government commission investigating the Kanam incident, unpublished – in possession of the author.
[407] Final report from the government commission investigating the Kanam incident. See also Lola Cecchinel, "Taleban Closing in on the City. The next round of the thug-of-war over Kunduz," *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, September 2, 2014; Ghanizada, "20 Civilians Killed Following Clashes in Kunduz," *Khaama Press*, August 11, 2014.
[408] 179; 008; 013; 022; 024.
[409] 024.

slaves. 'They go to the villagers and tell them his son should be in their group', said a tribal elder. 'People are defenseless, they can't do anything'.[410]

The militias generated much general insecurity not only through their harassment of villagers but also by regular fighting with other militias and Taliban – usually over who could collect 'tax'. Village elders tried to mediate but generally had little influence. Thanks to support from provincial and national government patrons, commanders operated with impunity. A local official recalled that commanders arrested for kidnappings or murder were later released because of Mir Alam's influence. A tribal elder said:

> Just recently a few gunmen kidnapped a 13-year old child. They had trouble transporting him to another place so they just killed him. Luckily the kidnappers were arrested. But I am sure they will be released soon.[411]

In 2011 and 2012 the government announced the disarmament of illegal militias but the weapon collection was very limited. The Taliban were even perceived as more supportive of the population's needs than the militias, and therefore attracted growing support. The presence of illegal militias thus challenged government presence both directly and indirectly through fuelling support for the insurgency.[412]

In sum, after the resurgence of the Taliban in Kunduz in 2008, Tajik powerbroker Mir Alam and his political patrons in Kabul used international support for anti-Taliban operations to strengthen their own positions. Though all political factions were in on this game, Shura-ye Nazar was especially successful in expanding its military presence in Kunduz, in both the formal and the informal security sectors. The increasing strength of informal militarised networks like that of Shura-ye Nazar was clearly at odds with DDR's objective of bolstering government institutions.
Mir Alam became a key player for Shura-ye-Nazar in the informal security sector. In spite of having participated several times in DDR programmes, his ties to his close commanders remained intact and he had kept weapons behind. When the Taliban resurfaced in Kunduz and international troops and local authorities turned to him and

[410] 013.
[411] 013.
[412] 008; 010; 013; 017.

his commanders to combat the insurgency, they did not formalise this arrangement by integrating him and his men into police and bringing them under institutional control. Instead they supported him and his men as illegal militias – directly contrary to the objectives of the DIAG programme, which at that time was still running. This allowed him to become the main strongman in Kunduz.

If anything, his network profited from a weak government and continued violence in the province, which meant continued support for him and his militias and limited checks on illegal activities like taxation and drug smuggling. Enabled by the political and financial support from political patrons in Kabul, commanders connected to Mir Alam, who were mostly Tajik, Aimaqs and Uzbeks, aggressively sought to expand their area of control, including in Pashtun communities, some of whom sought help from the Taliban to counter this expansion – thus escalating violence in the province.

4.2.2. The APRP

The Taliban's footprint in Kunduz and Baghlan had always been lighter than in Helmand and Uruzgan and it took longer for the insurgency to take hold in the northern provinces. It gathered pace in 2008 and 2009, mainly initiated from the outside, with arms and men coming from Pakistan and the south, according to Antonio Giustozzi and Christoph Reuter.[413] Several factors conspired to increase local acquiescence to the Taliban.

First, the weak local government was unable to provide basic public goods, particularly security and justice. This was partly the result of the competition between local factions linked to contesting Kabul politicians. Another reason was the influence over local governance of strongmen like Mir Alam, who had not been effectively disarmed nor reintegrated during the DDR process. The local administration fell into the clutches of informal networks that had no interest in addressing predatory militias. As a result, militias proliferated in the second half of the 2000s and generated enormous insecurity. This also alienated the local population from the government, creating an opportunity for the Taliban to move in.

[413] Giustozzi and Reuter, "The Northern Front".

The third main local driver of the insurgency was the political marginalisation and harassment of Pashtun communities, especially in districts where they were the largest ethnic group, like Aliabad, Chahar Dara and Dasht-e Archi. 'Our rights have been trampled on at the local and national level', said a Pashtun ALP official. 'The police chief is not from us, the head of security is not from us, nor is the head of the justice department. This is one of the reasons behind the insurgency in Kunduz'.[414] The marginalisation of Pashtuns deepened with the proliferation of militias after 2008. ALP militias became predominately non-Pashtun, even in districts where Pashtuns were in the majority. The ALP official said: 'The distribution of weapons to the ALP in Kunduz is unjust if you look at it from an ethnic perspective. For example in Aliabad there are maybe thirty Pashtuns among 250 ALP'.[415]

The proliferation of non-Pashtun militias increased the harassment of Pashtun communities, as shown in Kanam-e Kalan and Khanabad districts. In response, some communities turned to the Taliban. 'Previously there were no tribal and ethnic differences in Kanam', said a tribal elder. 'They [militias tied to Mir Alam] made this into a problem between Pashtuns and non-Pashtuns. The Taliban have infiltrated Kanam now because of this ethnic division'.[416]

In response to the burgeoning insurgency in late 2010, the U.S. deployed 4,000 troops to the region. This marked the start of an aggressive campaign to root out insurgent groups, which by that time included the Taliban, the Taliban-affiliated Haqqani network, Hezb-e Islami, Tajiks from Tajikistan and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan.[417] Intensive counterinsurgency and kill-or-capture missions in Kunduz

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414 002.
415 002.
416 013.
417 According to Giustozzi and Reuter at that time the number of foreign fighters in Kunduz was limited. Giustozzi and Reuter, "The Northern Front," 4. In later years increasing numbers of foreign fighters, including Chechens and al-Qaeda, were reported. See, for example, Dan Lamothe, "In Northern Afghanistan, a mix of Taliban, foreign fighters, and soldiers spread thin," *The Washington Post*, November 4, 2015 and Ayaz Gul, "Afghan Official: Over 1,300 Foreign Fighters in Kunduz Battle," *Voice of America*, November 15, 2015. Other authors, however, noted that mistakes were easily made, and that high numbers of foreign fighters suit the Afghan governments' and the international troops' narratives of the conflict. See Christian

from 2010 onwards, which were successful in pushing the Taliban back, were paralleled by and became linked to efforts to reintegrate insurgents under the APRP (though only Afghans were eligible).[418]

By the spring of 2014 the APRP had registered 385 participants in the province. All were Taliban, according to Wahidullah Rahmani, the head of the local secretariat, although only fifty-five were 'ideological' and fully integrated into the movement.[419] This implies that the rest, a large majority, operated in the insurgency's periphery. In fact the identity and numbers of participants were disputed, with well-informed sources claiming that the programme has attracted few genuine insurgents, and that at best participants were small commanders and fighters looking for benefits. [420]

One high-ranking official said: 'What have we achieved so far? Nothing, absolutely nothing. In some cases Taliban have joined the HPC [APRP] but these Taliban are not ideological Taliban. These are the unemployed figures; when they see their interests are on the side of the government, they come to its side'.[421] Another official concurred: 'No real Taliban I know of have surrendered. Most of them were irresponsible armed men who had some kind of connection to the Taliban. But they were not Taliban. When the Taliban was weakened through military operations, they left them to get some benefits from the HPC'.[422]

Moreover, of the 385 men listed as APRP participants in 2014, around 300 originally reintegrated not through the APRP but through the informal militia initiative of

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Bleuer, "Chechens in Afghanistan 2: How To Identify A Chechen," *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, July 3, 2016.

[418] It was not possible to track the participants of the PTS programme. However, as the PTS mainly operated in the time when there was very limited insurgency in Kunduz and Baghlan (donors started pulling out of the programme in 2008, and after that time until the start of APRP in 2011 the programme therefore mainly existed on paper), it is improbable that the high numbers of participants cited on the PTS website (1077 participants in Kunduz alone) are realistic (the website was accessed last on 12 September 2012, but is now no longer available).

[419] Rahmani also claimed that another 215 Taliban commanders and fighters were 'informally reintegrated', meaning they laid down their weapons without going through the APRP. Derksen, "The Politics," 39.

[420] 013; 017; 020; 021.

[421] 017.

[422] 010.

former police chief Sayed Kheili, who bought off Taliban commanders in Chahar Dara and Aliabad districts in 2010 with his own money.[423] A former western official who was working in Kunduz at the time said: 'It was Afghan reintegration, we were amazed by how quickly it went'. After Sayed Kheili's assassination in 2011 these commanders (and other non-insurgent militia commanders) were employed in the CIP militia. But Karzai took steps to abolish the programme by the end of 2011.[424]

The 100 or so that did reintegrate through the APRP were from the district of Imam Sahib, where Taliban fighters joined after an internal fight with members of al-Qaeda who reportedly were supposed to support them with military advice but were accused of instead stealing money. The local population withdrew support for the insurgency and the local Taliban commanders switched in December 2010. These first reintegration efforts were driven partly by ISAF, as the local peace council and secretariat had by that time not been set up. Little infrastructure was in place to support participants. 'We started (the APRP) in the district Imam Sahib. We tried to get funding to get them a safe house, money, projects. This was in December, but we're still waiting for Kabul', said a western official in March 2011. Instead, with American funds (the U.S. created a special fund of $50 million to help APRP participants through an American National Defence Authorization Act) the participants received short-term aid, like rice and cooking oil.[425]

In these circumstances guaranteeing their security was impossible. On 9 May 2011 former comrades killed ex-Taliban commander Maulawi Mohammad Nabi and four of his bodyguards were killed in Imam Saheb. In the first year of the APRP in Kunduz, three other reintegrated commanders were killed, by Taliban or 'pro-government' militias. As a result, high-level provincial officials withdrew support for the official programme even before its infrastructure was in place, and would only

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423 How the APRP numbers in Kunduz evolved is difficult to assess. The head of the provincial peace council Assadullah Omarkheil said in an interview in June 2014 that around 400 insurgents had reintegrated, which would correspond with the assessment of the head of the APRP secretariat. However, already in October 2011 Omarkheil had said to Pajhwok news agency that around 400 insurgents had reintegrated under the APRP, a number that was widely quoted at the time. Wahidullah, "Taliban Kill Ex-Comrade in Kunduz," *Pajhwok*, May 9, 2011. Derksen, "The Politics," 54.
424 506; see also Derksen, "The Politics," 39.
425 Derksen, "The Politics," 39.

cooperate with informal reintegration, away from media attention. The German and American military also appeared to lose interest. A former western official who was working in Kunduz at the time said: 'By the autumn of 2011 the APRP had basically ceased to exist in Kunduz. It was a child born dead'.[426]

4.3. Baghlan Province

4.3.1. DDR and DIAG – the case of Amir Gul

Hezb-e Islami commanders in Baghlan who had defected from the Taliban to the Northern Alliance in 2001 found their position precarious after the Taliban regime fell. Their former patrons had fled to Pakistan, while their ties to new patrons in the local government and Kabul were fragile at best. They became, first, the main losers of the DDR programme. Later, when some of them were supporting the insurgency, they were main recipients of APRP and ALP resources aimed at winning back their loyalty – though these resources did not secure their commitment to the government. Therefore they are an important example of how and why DDR failed in Afghanistan.[427]

When the AMF was established in 2002 the militias of the defected Pashtun commanders were absorbed into the 20th Division commanded by Mustafa Mohseni, a member of a powerful Tajik family from the district Andarab and supporter of the Shura-ye Nazar faction. Like elsewhere in the northeast the U.S.-led intervention had reversed the power balance between those who had backed the Taliban and Northern Alliance commanders, with the Shura-ye Nazar faction coming out on top – especially in the security sector.[428]

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[426] 506.

[427] This chapter discusses Amir Gul, Haji Wakil Alam Jan, Mullah Alam, Jumadin Kandak and Nur-ul Haq, who were former Hezb-e Islami commanders hailing from the mainly Pashtun areas in Baghlan (Baghlan-e Jadid district, Dahan-e Ghorie district and the Dand-e Ghorie area around the provincial capital Pul-e Khumri) who had been supporting the Taliban, defected to the Northern Alliance after the U.S.-led intervention in 2001, were subsequently integrated in the 20th Division of the AMF and DDR-ed in 2004.

[428] 509; 510; 413; 103; 435.

When the 20th Division was disbanded under the DDR programme in July 2004, Mohseni quickly found another lucrative position through his connections with the Shura-ye Nazar-dominated security ministries in Kabul. He first became police chief of Logar, then moved into the MoI as deputy head of Planning and Operations and in 2013 became the police chief of Kunduz. Other former Northern Alliance commanders and their men moved into the ANP in Baghlan after DDR, especially Tajiks connected to Shura-ye Nazar. Mohseni and his men were thus reintegrated into the state apparatus, albeit not through the DDR programme but through patronage, which meant that their militias were not disbanded but entered intact.[429]

Those with fewer connections in the new political order, especially Pashtun commanders who had been supporting the Taliban, lost out.[430] The example of Amir Gul is instructive. He was the former leader of Hezb-e Islami in Baghan (having taken over from his predecessor Bashir Baghlani in 2000), whose support to the Taliban in the second half of the nineties had been key to the movement capturing Baghlan and Kunduz.[431] He was a Pashtun from the Husseinkheil tribe that lived around the provincial capital Pul-e Khumri. As he had been operating in the former provincial capital Baghlan-e Jadid, he had moved there, taking some Husseinkheil families with him. As with many mujahedeen commanders he had become powerful in his area through his command of fighters in the jihad against the Soviets but he was not from the tribal elite, and interviewees point to another person as the head of the Husseinkheil tribe in Baghlan.[432]

Instead, Amir Gul was a self-made man. His career was characterised by opportunism rather than ideological commitment. He had switched allegiances many times since taking up arms against the Soviets in the 1980s and had ended up throwing in his lot

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[429] 025; 103.
[430] As mentioned in the introduction, under the Taliban regime the Hezb-e Islami militias had become ethnically homogenous, thus the exclusion of Hezb-e Islami commanders also had ethnic implications, aggravating Pashtun marginalisation.
[431] According to a U.S. Embassy Cable 'Gul informed the Taliban that Baghlani had several secret weapons caches that he had no intention of giving up. Baghlani was arrested by the Taliban and ended up spending time in a Kandahar prison'. U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan, "Bringing Down a Warlord and Keeping Him There," U.S. Embassy Cable ID 06KABUL3317, July 27, 2006. Published by *Wikileaks.org*.
[432] 129; 130.

with Shura-ye Nazar in 2001. In 2002 he was appointed as head of the 733 Battalion of the 20th Division, commanding a few hundred men.[433] But after defeating the Taliban and having inserted prominent loyalists in the state apparatus, Shura-ye Nazar political patrons in Kabul had little use for Gul. He became unemployed; trying but failing to secure a position in the local government and being excluded from running in the 2005 parliamentary elections because of his links to illegal armed men. Though the allegation was correct according to interviewees and other sources, it also applied to many other candidates, and only resulted in exclusion under DIAG for those with the fewest connections in Kabul.[434]

In 2006 he was arrested after a house search by ISAF and ANA forces, who suspected him of launching attacks against their troops, drugs smuggling and other criminal activities. During the raid, ISAF and ANA forces found not only bomb-making material but also several letters to the MoI requesting a position.[435]

Similar to Mir Alam in Kunduz Amir Gul seems to have been actively destabilising Baghlan-e Jadid in order to draw attention to his unemployment after DDR and show there would be no security without him. Interviewees confirm that Amir Gul had indeed kept links with his men after DDR and that illegally armed commanders linked

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433 Reports differ wildly on how many exactly, with some estimating it was in the thousands, but that seems an exaggeration. He probably commanded not more than 300-400 men. 010; 115; 131; 435.

434 It seems that he tried to placate DIAG officials by handing over weapons in 2005 (probably around hundred weapons). However, it didn't help him. 010; 129; 130; 425; 127; 131; 132; 133; Deedee Derksen et al., "Baghlan on the Brink, ANSF Weaknesses and Taleban Resilience," *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, May 31, 2013; U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan, "Bringing Down a Warlord".

435 A U.S. Embassy Cable said 'Despite having reportedly gone through the Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR) process a couple of years ago, Gul has remained one of Baghlan's most prominent warlords. According to multiple sources, he has been involved in a number of criminal activities, including extortion, robbery and drug trafficking'. U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan, "Bringing Down a Warlord". Amir Gul claimed he had meant to hand over the weapons found in his compound during the raid to DIAG officials. He would hand over weapons to DIAG for the third time in 2008. In total he handed over more than 300 weapons, according to a DIAG official. 010; U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan,"Baghlan Warlord Amir Gul Released," U.S Embassy Cable 06KABUL5920, December 21, 2006. Published by *Wikileaks.org*. See also Derksen "The Politics".

to him were involved in criminal activities, including extortion, illegal taxation, drugs smuggling and kidnapping, mostly in Baghlan-e Jadid.[436] An ALP commander said:

> Amir Gul has lots of armed groups in Baghlan-e Jadid. He tried to destabilise the situation so the government knew that as there was a lot of trouble, Amir Gul was the best guy to bring security, but in fact it was him who made the trouble. He funded different groups to attack the government, the police.[437]

Much like with Mir Alam in Kunduz, and many local powerbrokers who had gone through DDR elsewhere in Afghanistan, Amir Gul's approach to seeking employment in the new government paid off. Elders from Baghlan put pressure on President Karzai, who, despite protests from ISAF, the U.S. Embassy and UNAMA, released him from prison and appointed him as district governor in Baghlan-e Jadid in 2007.[438]

Although he became district governor (in which position he was allowed at most a few armed bodyguards) interviewees claim he was able to keep his ties to his former commanders, whose involvement in criminal activities continued. He also reportedly kept links to former commanders who had obtained positions in the local security apparatus, while remaining loyal to him.[439] Amir Gul claimed that he was an old man and not their boss. He also said, however, '[w]e have spent a long time together in the strongholds against Russians and Taliban. They are my own people from Baghlan and they support me and I support them'.[440]

The main source of Amir Gul's increasing formal and informal power in the second half of the 2000s was Fahim, with whom he reportedly shared a love for *bushkashi*.[441] Like Mir Alam in Kunduz, Amir Gul had become a part of Fahim's expanding informal network in the northeast, which the Shura-ye Nazar leader used to revive his political career and become vice-president in 2009. Interviewees claim that Gul owed his six-month stint as commander of the 6th Brigade of the Civil Order Police,

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436 129; 130; 425; 107; 127; 131; 132; 133.
437 120.
438 See Derksen "The Politics" and U.S. Embassy Cable, "Baghlan Warlord".
439 129; 130; 425; 108.
440 Derksen, "The Politics," 41.
441 National sport in which horse-mounted players try to haul the carcass of a goat or a calf to the goal.

commanding 400 police, to Fahim.[442] Gul, who claimed to have always been affiliated with Jamiat – and denied ever having had ties to the Taliban or Hezb-e Islami – described Fahim as a 'sympathetic man, to me and to all people'.[443]

A prominent Shura-ye Nazar figure from Baghlan said:

> Both Amir Gul and Mir Alam were commanders of Marshal [Fahim]. They supported him in his bad days, how could Marshal forget them? Of course he defended them by all means, until the last minute of his life.[444]

Amir Gul's illegally armed network, which survived his participation in DDR and DIAG, and his ties to Fahim allowed him to pursue his own interests, even if they clashed with those of the government. This became clear after a much-publicised incident on 25 October 2012. In the bazaar of Baghlan-e Jadid four Afghan Special Operations Forces attempted to disarm an illegally armed and uniformed bodyguard of Ridi Gul, a former jihadi commander close to Amir Gul. Police under the command of district police chief Mohammad Kameen, a former 733 Brigade sub-commander who had remained a close ally of Amir Gul after DDR, arrived and stopped the soldiers who had continued their patrol. After an altercation, the police opened fire and killed three of the four soldiers. Kameen and Amir Gul were fired as police chief and district governor, but refused to leave.[445]

In a second attempt to dislodge Gul and Kameen on 24 November 2012 provincial police chief Assadullah Shirzad went with twenty ANP to appoint a new district police chief. Fighting between Shirzad's force and Amir Gul's men raged from midnight, the deadline Shirzad had given Gul to surrender to him, until 4 am. Then Amir Gul and Kameen escaped to Kabul. The families of deceased soldiers accused the presidential palace of supporting them there. Senate leaders called on the government to prosecute the two in an open trial. But despite warrants having been issued for the arrest of Kameen for the killing of the Afghan SOF and the fight against

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[442] They differ on when it happened, it seems to have been after 2009. 425; 129; 122; 120; 011.
[443] Derksen, "The Politics," 41.
[444] 025.
[445] 120; 101; 129. See also Derksen et al., "Baghlan on the Brink".

the police, and against Gul for the latter incident, they remained free and returned to Baghlan-e Jadid.[446]

The incidents surrounding the killing of the three Afghan SOF and the failure to arrest Gul then and his arrest and release in 2006 by international forces, convinced villagers in Baghlan-e Jadid that he was judicially untouchable. As one villager said about the 2006 arrest: 'The Americans arrested him, but then he was released. This means the Americans were backing him'.[447] Another said: 'We can't do anything, because we know he is backed by Fahim'.[448]

The impunity of Amir Gul and commanders linked to him and their predatory tactics led to resistance among local communities, and therefore also indirectly contributed to the increasing instability security situation in Baghlan-e Jadid. From 2008 onwards many turned to the Taliban to express their discontent and protect themselves. 'Commanders and police linked to Amir Gul were stealing cars, kidnapping and keeping people in private jails', said an elder from the village Mullahkheil in an interview in 2014. 'So when the Taliban came [around 2008], we supported them rather than calling the police'.[449]

Members of Pashtun Gadi tribe in Baghlan-e Jadid accused Amir Gul and Kameen and their men of harassing them. Their rivalry went back to the early days of the war, when prominent Gadi tribe members were part of the PDPA government and Amir Gul fought them as a Hezb-e Islami commander.'The Gadi made the history of Baghlan but they have been so side lined that they now have no role in the local government', said a tribal elder.[450]

He recounted the story of Taliban commander Bor Jan:

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[446] 101; 011; 102; 107; 120; I also wrote about this story in Derksen "The Politics" and with co-authors in Derksen et al., "Baghlan on the Brink"; "Families of killed Afghan army officers demand justice," *Tolo Television*, January 7, 2013 (BBC Monitoring).
[447] 125.
[448] 130.
[449] 125; his allegations were also levelled by other interviewees, including 135, 102 and 120.
[450] 148.

> He is another victim of Northern Alliance atrocities. Amir Gul conspired against him and imprisoned him in the name of Taliban. He was then forced to go and join the Taliban.[451]

Another former Gadi Taliban commander said:

> I was a *miraw*[452] in my area, I was serving villagers. But some of the people who were working with me were shot dead by irresponsible armed people who were connected to Amir Gul and Kameen [when they were respectively district governor and district police chief]. Looking at that situation, I decided to pick up my gun and start jihad against those corrupt and criminal officials.[453]

By November 2009 the Taliban insurgency had grown so strong that hundreds of fighters stormed the district center and the house of Gul, then district governor, in an attempt to takeover Baghlan-e Jadid. In spite of Gul's assertions that he had fully complied with the DDR and DIAG programmes and was an old man not in charge of armed men, he was then able to quickly mobilise a few hundred loyal militia commanders and repel the attacks.[454]

In sum, the failure of DDR and DIAG programmes to disarm Amir Gul's militias or integrate them in the security apparatus resulted in his armed network continuing to exist but underground, making it harder for government institutions to control it. Much like what happened with Mir Alam in neigbouring Kunduz, his militias became a tool in Shura-ye Nazar's expanding informal influence in the northeast, undermining the state's institutional power that the DDR and DIAG programmes had sought to strengthen.

After the 2014 electoral crisis, and the formation of a unity government between Ashraf Ghani and Dr. Abdullah Abdullah to succeed the Karzai administration, the new government appointed Amir Gul, who reportedly continued to receive support

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451 100.
452 Someone who distributes water for the irrigation of agricultural land.
453 004.
454 Hakimi and Goodhand, "Counterinsurgency, Local Militias and Statebuilding," 27; Giustozzi and Reuter, "The Insurgents of the Afghan North," 40.

from high-ranking Jamiat figures after Fahim's death, as the head of the provincial ALP – in spite of the allegations of links to illegal armed groups and involvement in anti-government activities. At best they secured his temporary loyalty – until resources run out. But his exclusionary and predatory rule is unlikely ever to contribute to stability, proof of which is Baghlan's still fragile security situation.[455]

4.3.2. The APRP

Most attempts at reintegrating insurgents in Baghlan took place after 2010, when the insurgency picked up in the province. Most involved the APRP programme and, informally, the ALP. Much like in neighbouring Kunduz major drivers of local support or acquiescence to the Taliban were the weak government crippled by factional infighting, its support of predatory militias and the post-2001 marginalisation of Pashtun communities.

Some Hezb-e Islami commanders, unemployed after DDR, had started cooperating with the Taliban, which increased its activity in Baghlan after 2007. A former jihadi commander said 'after DDR at first security was good, but after a few years it became bad. Commanders had expected things from the government and rearmed again and worked with the Taliban and Hezb-e Islami'.[456]

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[455] 134; 122; 413; 004.

[456] 106. The Hezb-e Islami commanders cooperating with the Taliban operated mainly in Baghlan-e Jadid and Dand-e Ghorie, the area between Pul-e Khumri and Baghlan-e Jadid. The other mainly Pashtun district in northern Baghlan, Dahan-e-Ghorie, also became a Taliban stronghold. Though Pashtuns were the main supporters of the Taliban, they also gained ground among other ethnicities in other districts. The growing insurgency in the second half of the decade was initiated by Taliban operating in southern Afghanistan, according to Reuter and Giustozzi. Interviews with local Taliban commanders indeed confirmed help from commanders in the south. Many interviewees in Baghlan also accused 'Pakistan' of being behind the surge of violence in Baghlan. 103; 026; 120; 005; 006.
In spite of the growing insurgency the Hungarian PRT was reluctant to engage the Taliban in fighting. The Hungarian troops, who took over the ISAF PRT in Baghlan from the Dutch in 2006, 'had neither the resources nor the political will to control ... large parts of the province', Giustozzi and Reuter stated in their 2011 report "The Insurgents of the Afghan North," 40. This changed only after German and American troops started operating in Baghlan in 2009. Then in 2010, U.S. SOF started conducting capture-or-kill missions. These operations hit the Taliban badly, eliminating parts of their local command structure and taking away some of their territorial gains. Derksen et al., "Baghlan on the Brink"; U.S. Embassy in

After Hezb-e Islami's initial cooperation with the Taliban, the two sides fell out in the winter of 2009 and 2010. Some interviewees say that the Taliban fought Hezb-e Islami over its taxation and harassment of villagers, but this may have been a pretext. While allying with Hezb-e Islami had initially been a way for the Taliban to access Baghlan, much like in the 1990s, by winter 2009-10 the Taliban had grown strong enough to operate by itself. Moreover, say some, the Taliban accused Hezb-e Islami of collaborating with the government, which may have been true. Trying to challenge Shura-ye-Nazar power in Baghlan, President Karzai had been appointing Hezb-e Islami officials in the province.[457] The Fahim-backed remobilisation drive in the northeast before the 2009 presidential elections had also prompted President Karzai's camp to support the rearmament of Hezb-e Islami militias in Baghlan and neighbouring Kunduz.[458] Mediation attempts by tribal elders failed. 'Hezb-e Islami was ready to make peace but not the Taliban', said one tribal elder from Baghlan-e Jadid.[459]

Fighting started that winter between the two groups in the north of Baghlan (including Baghlan-e Jadid). The dual pressure of Taliban attacks and intensified U.S. operations led Hezb-e Islami commanders in an area north of Pul-e Khumri called Shahabuddin to panic and surrender to the government. This group of an estimated 70 to 100 men became the first group nationwide to enter into the APRP, even before it had been officially established by presidential decree (which happened in June 2010). Although the programme had only just been announced at the London Conference, SOF operating in the area were keen to start reintegrating insurgents and proceeded.[460]

Without any infrastructure to accommodate and protect them, however, participants were determined to remain armed. When the ALP programme was rolled out in

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Afghanistan. "Bringing Down a Warlord"; Giustozzi and Reuter, "The Insurgents of the Afghan North," 40.

[457] 126; 430; 114; 115; 119; 557; Giustozzi and Reuter, "The Insurgents of the Afghan North," 3,19, 21.

[458] 126; 430; 114; 115; 119; 557; 413; 103; 122; Giustozzi and Reuter, "The Insurgents of the Afghan North," 3,19, 21. See also Derksen, "The Politics".

[459] 135.

[460] 535; Ulrike Demmer, "The Battle of Shahabuddin, Under Fire in Afghanistan's Baghlan Province," *Der Spiegel*, October 13, 2010.

Baghlan in February 2011, SOF ensured that APRP participants Hezb-e Islami commander Sher and his men were enrolled (in September 2011 commander Sher was killed and the group split, with his brother taking some fighters and another commander called Nur-ul-Haq, who assumed command of the ALP in Shahabuddin, the remainder).[461]

Whereas in Kunduz local powerbrokers, including Jamiat loyalists, had been successful in exploiting the ALP programme, in Baghlan SOF and the faction around President Karzai used ALP resources to lure Hezb-e Islami commanders away from the insurgency, at least temporarily (in fact they continued to switch their loyalty back and forth between the government and the Taliban). The ALP programme's initiation in Baghlan (in the three Pashtun dominated districts) therefore partially offset Pashtun marginalisation in the province. A Pashtun powerbroker argued that the formation of the ALP 'changed the structure and balance of power, because now we have a few Pashtun officials in Baghlan'.[462] An ally in the provincial council, also a Pashtun, said: 'Pashtuns are in a better position now than they used to be. It is not as easy now to arrest Pashtuns as it was in the past'.[463]

Until the Ghani government – when Jamiat gained control over the ALP with the appointment of Amir Gul as ALP chief – the ALP programme favoured Pashtun powerbrokers who had previously been excluded. Examples included members of the Gadi tribe in Baghlan-e Jadid and Amir Gul's rivals, who were quoted above, and Hezb-e Islami powerbroker Mullah Alam in the Dand-e Ghori area of Pul-e Khumri.

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[461] According to a local source Nur-ul Haq was a former sub-commander of former Hezb-e Islami commander Mullah Alam, whose career is explored below. 425. International observers were however divided on the question if his group was a Hezb-e Islami outfit or a pro-government militia. They may have been switching back and forth before joining the APRP. Derksen, "Peace from the Bottom-Up", 14. According to Giustozzi and Reuter the Hezb-e Islami fighters received asylum at the district police headquarters in Pul-e Khumri and then relocated to a private building, provided mainly with food by UNAMA and USAID until July 2010. Giustozzi and Reuter, "The Insurgents of the Afghan North," 43.

[462] 103.

[463] 122.
The inclusion of marginalised Pashtun powerbrokers in the ALP was the result of a campaign of fellow-Pashtuns in the local government on their behalf. 111; 196; 165.

Mullah Alam had been a *kandak* (battalion) commander in the AMF after 2001 and had been left unemployed by the DDR programme.[464] By the end of 2010 Interior Minister Hanif Atmar reportedly gave permission and support to arm 120 of Alam's men, to fight with the government against insurgents. The Baghlan police commander at the time, General Abdul Rahman Rahimi, who was trying to counter the Jamiat influence in the provincial security sector, supported this initiative.[465] In 2011 under SOF supervision, Mullah Alam's fighters were integrated in the ALP. Although Mullah Alam had no official position he exerted influence over ALP appointments under the Karzai administration, especially in the Dand-e Ghori of Pul-e Khumri.[466]

The ALP became a major source of hope for unemployed Pashtun commanders in Baghlan, and Nur-ul Haq's much-publicised enrollment in the militia programme through the APRP had a significant impact on their perceptions of the APRP. Many small-time Pashtun commanders (usually with 5-20 fighters) tried to get into the programme in 2011 with the hope of enrolling into the ALP. Most knocked on the doors of police chief Rahmani and NDS chief Mohammad Hafiz. However, more often than not, they languished in police stations and in NDS offices (as, much like in other provinces, the APRP infrastructure took some time to set up) and could not get into the ALP.[467]

As with the first DDR programme, receiving an attractive job in the security sector depended on connections. In this case this usually meant ties to SOF (who, for example, favoured Nur-ul Haq in Shahabuddin over his rival Jumadin Kandak; another unemployed former AMF commander who had turned to the Taliban and then enrolled in the APRP in the hope of getting into the ALP), President Karzai or Minister Atmar (with whom Mullah Alam had good connections, but many of the smaller local commanders who joined the APRP did not).

This deterred many insurgent commanders from participating in the APRP. A former

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[464] According to a friend Mullah Alam 'handed over only the weapons that were unusable, as a symbolic gesture to show that he had participated in DDR'. 126.
[465] 413; 103; 150.
[466] 103.
[467] 111; 114; 128.

Hezb-e Islami commander from Baghlan-e Jadid, who had joined the Taliban, wanted to join the APRP in 2013 but could not, according to a tribal elder. 'He had been in prison in Bagram because he was with the Taliban but last December [2013] he was released. He did not want to go back to the Taliban or Hezb-e Islami, but he said he needed weapons for his own protection and wanted to enroll in the ALP but no one accepted his request. Now he is back with the Taliban and he has recently returned to Baghlan. As soon as he came back he captured four police check points'.[468]

The perceived link between the ALP and the APRP also led to concerns in the Shura-ye Nazar faction, which was afraid to lose its influence over the local security sector. Shura-ye Nazar powerbrokers denounced the APRP, while at the same time trying to insert allies into it.[469] For example, Pamir Zone 303 police commander Daud Daud, the former AMF 6th Corps commander for the northeast, in 2011 tried to inject a commander in the APRP who was tied to him and had no insurgent links, with around hundred of his men.[470] Right before enrolling in the APRP Mohammad Gul Arab had been fighting alongside General Daud Daud in a military operation in the Burka district.[471] 'General Daud Daud reintegrated [into the APRP] 200 to 300 illegally armed people from Jamiat to counterbalance the Hezb people', said a high-ranking official in Kabul.[472] Other interviewees saw the problem in terms of ethnicity. 'General Daud Daud wanted to select Tajiks and some Pashtuns to work against other Pashtuns'.[473] A member of the local peace council said at the time:

> Now in Baghlan there is a big problem between the Tajiks and Pashtuns because of reintegration. Because Tajiks think that most of the Pashtuns join with the government. They think that again they get weapons and they become powerful in the area, so Tajiks are trying themselves to get more power.[474]

An UN-official working in the area said:

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468 148.
469 509.
470 121; 510; 421; 140; 149; a member of the local peace council said that though they were admitted into the APRP, SOF prevented Mohammad Gul Arab from joining the ALP (122).
471 121.
472 413.
473 129; also 435. See also Luke Mogelson, "Bad Guys vs Worse Guys in Afghanistan," *New York Times*, October 19, 2011.
474 Derksen, "Peace from the Bottom-Up," 18.

> The authorities here are confused about the APRP and the ALP because they were launched at the same time. It sent the wrong message. It took a long time for authorities here to understand that the APRP was not a channel for the ALP.[475]

In sum, the APRP's perceived link with the ALP made it an attractive but controversial programme in Baghlan. The ALP, while in effect functioning as an informal reintegration programme, was only accessible to those with good connections to SOF or the faction around President Karzai that was keen to empower Pashtun loyalist powerbrokers in the province.

Arming APRP participants through the ALP also had other negative side effects. Old rivalries were not only perpetuated but entered a new phase, as one side suddenly had more arms and the might of the SOF behind it, as was the case for Nur-ul Haq versus Jumadin Kandak in Shahabuddin. Although the ALP programme lessened Pashtun marginalisation, this led not to a more inclusive local government but to two parallel security sectors, with both sides having an interest in 'durable disorder', rather than in a strong and inclusive government.[476]

In the absence of high-level reconciliation and a more inclusive local government, security remained a pressing issue for APRP participants, especially for the majority that did not get into the ALP. Commander Bismullah claimed to have joined the Taliban in 2008 in Baghlan-e Jadid after death threats by a local Junbesh commander. He was then caught up in the fight between Hezb-e Islami and the Taliban in the district. He fled to Chahar Dara district in Kunduz, where some of his fighters were killed in a bombardment. He and the surviving fighters then joined the APRP and were given jobs maintaining a road. But in May 2014, Bismullah was killed. After his death, his remaining fighters were fired.[477]

Bismullah's friends think the Taliban killed him. 'It was a revenge of the Taliban', said an elder of Bismullah's home area. 'Taliban said that he defamed them by joining

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[475] 509.
[476] Goodhand and Hakimi, "Counterinsurgency," 31.
[477] 114; 115; 119; see also Derksen, "The Politics".

to peace programme. He was very active. He had brought other Taliban as well to the peace programme. He brought four or five groups of Taliban to the government side'.[478]

The former *miraw* in Baghlan-i-Jadid, who claimed to have turned to the Taliban for help after some of the people working with him were killed by ALP commanders linked to Amir Gul, is concerned about his security after joining the APRP but failing to enter into the ALP, according to him because the then district governor Amir Gul and district police chief Kameen prevented it. In a 2014 interview he said:

> I joined the APRP in 2011 at the request of police chief Rahmani [General Abdul Rahman Rahmani]. He called on Haji Nezam [leader of the Gadi tribe in Baghlan-e Jadid, rival of Amir Gul and ally of the *miraw*], Amir Gul and Kameen and told them they had to support the peace programme. But since this time some of the reintegrated Taliban commanders were shot dead, like Bismullah and a commander called Nazir. I don't think the Taliban have killed them. I think the personal rivalries have started again. I don't know what I am supposed to do and how to protect myself.[479]

Without the type of inclusive government in Baghlan that could only result from high-level political reconciliation, it was difficult, if not impossible, for Taliban and Hezb-e Islami commanders to successfully participate in the APRP or another reintegration programme. Unsurprisingly, APRP participants in Baghlan interviewed for this PhD seemed to belong mostly to small militias, some of whom may have joined the insurgency only temporarily. By contrast, the main Taliban commanders in Baghlan in the early years of the programme said they wanted nothing to do with the APRP without their leaders' consent. A local mid-level Taliban commander, reportedly fighting against Sher and Nur-ul Haq, said:

> Taliban high-ranking people will not ask me to lay down my weapons. They will only do this when they are in negotiations with the government of Afghanistan and once the foreign troops leave. Then I am okay to lay down my weapons.[480]

The provincial peace council has been accused by many, including some involved in

[478] 115.
[479] 161.
[480] 008.

the APRP, of awarding jobs to friends and relatives rather than reintegrating Taliban commanders. The same allegation has been leveled against provincial peace councils in many other provinces. APRP officials deny the allegations. But Baghlan in 2014 had one of the highest numbers of participants in the country, despite concerns expressed by a peace council member that the council 's members did not have the backgrounds or contacts to reach out to the Taliban.[481] 'Most of them are from Jamiat, and there are just a few Pashtuns. But they are for show'.[482]

In sum, as a result of the first participant Nur-ul Haq joining the ALP through the APRP, the two programmes became connected in the perception of many local powerbrokers. This led to a number of problems and the APRP became controversial, with non-insurgent powerbrokers denouncing it and inserting their own followers at the same time. In the absence of high-level reconciliation with the Taliban and a more inclusive government both nationally and locally, security remained a major problem for commanders joining the APRP, most of whom could not get into the ALP. As a result, the programme mainly attracted small-time militia, some of who had been switching back and forth to the insurgency, not the main local Taliban commanders. Moreover, allegations were made that the APRP's local management used resources to distribute patronage to followers.

4.4. DDR deepens political exclusion in the northeast

The DDR, DIAG and APRP programmes in the north were initiated in the context of the exclusionary post-2001 political order, which they reflected and deepened. This was especially problematic since the loyalty of armed commanders to the government after 2001 was primarily dependent on their access to government resources, which were distributed through factional senior officials in the government. The post-2001 domination of non-Pashtun powerbrokers in Kunduz and Baghlan and the exclusion of Pashtun communities from representation in the local administration was a crucial factor in the resurgence of the Taliban after 2008. Without the inclusion of more non-Jamiat affiliated Pashtun powerbrokers in the local administration – which, in turn,

[481] 115; 119; 161; 147; 510; 129. In Spring 2014 there were 740 APRP participants in Baghlan – one of the highest numbers in the country.
[482] 109.

would have necessitated a change at the national level – the APRP could not provide Taliban commanders a real alternative and was thus unsuccessful in attracting them. Resources mostly went to the APRP administration, which was made up of people who were already part of the establishment.

The DDR and DIAG programmes were almost entirely shaped by patronage from the Jamiat establishment in Kabul. Commanders with good connections, like 6th Corps chief General Daud and 20th Division Chief Mustafa Mohseni won attractive government positions after DDR. Those with weaker connections, who did not get local positions, like 54th Division commander Mir Alam and 733 Battalion commander Amir Gul, started agitating against the government, to show that they were key to the province's stability. This proved an effective tactic and they were rewarded with government positions. They were eventually removed, but retained informal influence.

In their capacity as strongmen they became key players in Jamiat's informal militarised network in the northeast, exerting influence on local government appointments and heading the expansion of illegal armed groups, especially after the Taliban's resurgence in 2008 and Fahim's comeback in Kabul. DDR had originally played a significant role in pusing local armed groups underground and making them informal and more dependent on political patrons in Kabul, instead of integrating them into the government and bringing them under institutional control. The programme thus paradoxically contributed to a strengthening of Shura-ye Nazar's militarised network in Kunduz and Baghlan at the expense of a strengthening of government institutions – exactly the opposite of what it was meant to do.

The ALP and militias with ties to local strongmen appeared to help the government successfully push back the local Taliban after their resurgence in Kunduz and Baghlan in 2008. Below the surface however, things were less clearcut. It appeared that these local armed groups – ALP, *arbakai* and Taliban – were primarily fighting over control over villages in order to win local disputes over land, water and other issues and to be able to force people to pay taxes. They also fought for control over smuggling routes to Central Asia.

Loyalty to the government only lasted as long as it could pay for weapons and ammunition – with many commanders switching back and forth to the Taliban. Following this logic, the remobilisation of militias after 2008, and, to a lesser extent, the APRP worked as reintegration programmes – reintegrating commanders who would otherwise turn against the government. But provided their militias were not fully integrated into the government apparatus, with command structures weakened, their loyalty would always remain with the local strongman, who could turn against the government again as soon as resources dried up.

The militias' increased strength meant that by 2014 government institutions had less influence over armed men in Kunduz and Baghlan than at any point of time since the international intervention in 2001. Men operating in the fragmented informal and semi-informal security sector and in the insurgency greatly outnumbered the security forces. In most villages, it seemed, they dominated daily life and had taken over the state in core tasks such as mobilising men to fight, security provision, taxation and justice – such as they existed.[483]

The general insecurity grew, and the local population often did not regard the Taliban insurgency as its primary cause. Many villagers had become increasingly alienated from the government, which was associated with predatory militias. This provided space for the Taliban to increase its presence and a year after the end of the Karzai administration it managed to take Kunduz City and hold on to it for two weeks. New President Ashraf Ghani's first response was to request the international community for 15,000 more ALP.[484]

[483] According to a senior provincial official in May 2014 there were 1,000 to 1,300 Taliban operating in Kunduz and 3,000 to 5,000 illegal militia. The number of ALP was 1,350 (300 in Dasht-e-Archi, 300 in Imam Saheb, 200 in Aliabad, 300 in Char Dara and 250 in Kunduz City). The number of ANP was 2,700. 023; 027; 025.
[484] Alissa J. Rubin, "For Afghans in Kunduz, Taliban Assault Is Just Latest Affront," *New York Times*, October 7, 2015; Mujib Mashal, "Afghan Plan to Expand Militia Raises Abuse Concerns," *New York Times*, October 16, 2015.

Chapter 5 DDR in the Southwest: Uruzgan and Helmand

5.1. Background to post-2001 conflict dynamics

5.1.1. Pre-2001

Uruzgan and Helmand are part of Greater Kandahar (Kandahar, Helmand, Zabul and Uruzgan), with 'the main tribal, political and economic networks transcending the current administrative boundaries'. Helmand was established as separate province in 1960, Uruzgan in 1964.[485] Politically speaking, Greater Kandahar has historically been of great significance, as ancestral home of many Afghan kings and leaders, including the late Taliban leader Mullah Omar and former President Karzai.

Socio-economically, however, the area has traditionally been less developed than Kunduz and Baghlan. Both provinces score very low on development indicators. For example, literacy rates in Helmand and Uruzgan were only 5 per cent mid-2000. The two provinces rank the lowest country-wide in primary school attendance (Helmand worst, Uruzgan second worst). Under-five mortality rates are high; Uruzgan ranks as the second highest province, Helmand is also among the top ten.[486]

Local economies are still mostly agricultural. Inhabitants mainly rely on the production of wheat, corn, maize, vegetables, orchard crop and opium and on animal

[485] Martine van Bijlert, "Unruly Commanders and Violent Power Struggles – Taliban Networks in Uruzgan" in Antonio Giustozzi ed., *Decoding the Taliban – Insight from the Afghan Field*, (London: Hurst & Company, 2009), 155.
[486] Stuart Gordon, "Winning Hearts and Minds? Examining the Relationship between Aid and Security in Afghanistan," *Feinstein International Center*, April 2011, 10; "Best Estimates Fact Sheet – Uruzgan/Daikunde," date unknown. Available at http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/files/Best_Estimates_Fact_Sheet_-_Uruzgan.PDF. UNICEF; "Best Estimates Fact Sheet – Helmand," UNICEF, date unknown. Available at http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/files/Best_Estimates_Fact_Sheet_-_Helmand.PDF.

husbandry. A major source of water is the Helmand river, containing around 40 per cent of Afghanistan's surface water.[487]

Migration brought major changes in the local population over past centuries in both provinces and has been, much like in the northeast, a cause of local conflict. Uruzgan was originally inhabited by Hazaras. They were expelled in the 18th and 19th centuries by Pashtun kings, who gave their lands to Pashtun tribes. Currently only around 10 per cent of the local population is Hazara (living mostly in districts Khas Uruzgan and Gizab) and the rest is Pashtun. The majority of the Pashtuns are Durrani, which is one of the two main Pashtun kinship units; the other being the Ghilzai. Around 40-45 per cent of the population belongs to the Zirak branch of the Durrani confederation (tribes are Popalzai, Barakzai, Achekzai, Mohammadzai and Alikozai) and 30 per cent Durrani Panjpaj (main tribes are Noorzai and Khugiani). Around 15 per cent of the population are Ghilzai (mainly Tokhi and Hotak tribes).[488]

In Helmand, Durrani tribes were given lands previously belonging to Ghilzai tribes by Afghan kings in the 18th century (Helmand was then called Puhst-e Rud, or transriver). Under Popalzai ruler Ahmad Shah Durrani, the Barakzai – a large Durrani tribe – secured central Helmand, which includes the best land on the alluvial plains of four rivers. When Barakzai ruler Dost Mohammad usurped the Popalzai throne in 1826, the tribe gained in power in relation to other tribes. From this time stems the rivalry between the Barakzai and the Alizai tribes, who had obtained Zamindawar (northern Helmand) from Ahmad Shah Durrani. Under Abdur Rahman many Ishaqzai and Noorzai from the Panjpaj branch of the Durrani, who had also received lands in Helmand from Ahmad Shah Durrani, were induced to move to populate the northwest. The move was not a success however. Many returned, but this time to marginal lands in Helmand. Mike Martin sees this event as the foundation of the Ishaqzais' and, to a lesser degree, Noorzais' disenchantment with the government.[489]

Another major migration that would influence conflict dynamics in Helmand was the move of mainly Ghilzai tribes to Nad-e Ali and Marjah, two areas in central Helmand

[487] Gordon, "Winning Hearts and Minds?," 9.
[488] Van Bijlert, "Unruly Commanders," 155; 218.
[489] Martin, *Intimate War*, 25.

that were reclaimed from the desert through canal projects in the 1950s with American aid. Though the immigration of non-Helmandis negatively affected the power of the Barakzai, the real losers were the other Helmandi tribes, including the Alizai, the Ishaqzai and the Noorzai, whose lands did not benefit from the same socio-economic modernisation – reinforcing their suspicions that the government was not interested in helping them. Currently the main tribes in Helmand are the Barakzai (32 per cent), the Noorzai (16 per cent), the Alikozai (9 per cent) and the Ishaqzai (5.2 per cent).[490]

Reflecting the main tribal dynamics in greater Kandahar, in Uruzgan and Helmand the disputes between the Durrani and Ghilzai tribal confederations and between the Zirak and Panjpaj branches of the Durrani have been 'revisited under every regime'.[491] In Uruzgan other power struggles have been between Popalzai and Barakzai powerbrokers (two tribes within the Zirak that have historically competed for the throne) and between the Hazaras and the Pashtuns in Gizab and Khas Uruzgan. A multitude of bloody clashes between rival commanders, have also been fought 'over resources or prominence within the (sub)tribe'.[492] In Helmand power struggles have likewise been over prominence within the (sub)tribe and resources, with the opium trade a particular nexus for conflict dynamics. With comparatively fewer Popalzai than in Uruzgan the main elite rivalry was between Alizai and Barakzai powerbrokers.[493]

During the fight against the Soviets and the PDPA government, whose land reform was especially unpopular in the south, commanders from these tribes in many cases joined rivalling jihadi parties, which led to a new cycle of the conflicts.[494] As Martin

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[490] Martin, *Intimate War*, 17-35; Stuart Gordon, "Aid and Stabilization, Helmand Case Study," *The Royal Institute of International Affairs*, 2010, 6.
[491] Martine Van Bijlert, "The Taliban in Zabul and Uruzgan," in *Talibanistan: Negotiating the Borders Between Terror, Politics and Religion*, ed. Peter Bergen. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 98.
[492] Van Bijlert, "The Taliban in Zabul and Uruzgan," 98. Unpublished study for the Dutch government on Uruzgan, *The Liaison Office*, 2006, 13, 24, 25.
[493] Stuart Gordon, "Aid and Stabilization," 17.
[494] During the jihad against the Soviets local commanders mobilised fighters from their solidarity networks or *qaums*. These solidarity networks, which were always shifting, could be based on shared experiences, for example having fought on the

argues, the narrative of the mujahedeen resisting the Soviets is only partially true for the Helmandis (and the same can be said for the Uruzganis), who in reality primarily 'fought each other utilising and manipulating external ideologies in an attempt to leverage local disputes'.[495] These local armed conflicts continued after the departure of the Soviets and the collapse of the PDPA government, and spilled over into an all-out civil war; though with fewer external resources than before, as the Americans were no longer interested in Afghanistan.

The Taliban arrived in Uruzgan and Helmand shortly after the movement was established in neighbouring Kandahar in 1994. Its rule in both provinces was relatively quiet. Martin attributes it to the Taliban's knowledge of local politics, which was good as many Taliban high-level figures came from Uruzgan and Helmand. Although they often favoured supporters from the heavily clerical mujahedeen party Harakat-e Enqelab, they were flexible enough to support Jamiatis or Hezbis if this was more opportune. Though some people objected to their strict social mores, their introduction of basic law and order after a turbulent time was widely appreciated. Also, as the Taliban movement originated from Kandahar their view on social order differed little from that of many tribesmen in the traditionally conservative southwest.[496]

5.1.2. Post-2001

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same side in the past, having grown up in the same village, or having attended the same school. Alternatively, they could revolve around religious or economic networks. But the most important focus of loyalty, conflict and obligations of patronage in the south were tribal and sub-tribal affiliations. This was especially the case for provincial-level strongmen, according to villagers, who in interviews emphasized that for them (the villagers) their tribe or sub-tribe was not important to their identity, even in interaction with people from other tribes. However, strongmen usually enlisted the help of fellow-tribesmen in their power struggles, thus reaffirming local political divisions along tribal and sub-tribal lines. 200; 201; 202; 203; 205; 210; 212; 213; 215; 223; 224; 236; 232; 528. Derksen, "The Politics". On affiliations in the south see also Van Bijlert, "The Taliban in Zabul and Uruzgan," 97-99 and Van Bijlert, "Unruly Commanders," 156.

[495] Martin, *Intimate War*, 40, 49. Likewise, Van Bijlert writes about Uruzgan that 'much of the combat activities concerned inter-factional fighting'. Van Bijlert, "Unruly Commanders," 157.

[496] Martin, *Intimate War,* 94-105, Van Bijlert, "Unruly Commanders," 157.

Much as elsewhere in Afghanistan, the U.S.-led intervention in 2001 had a major impact on local power relations in Uruzgan and Helmand. Though the Taliban had presented itself as a detribalised organisation, and had actively tried to weaken tribal leaders, during its rule powerbrokers from formerly marginalised tribes such as the Ghilzai and the Durrani Panjpaj had had more opportunities to gain power than in previous times (especially compared to the former monarchy, with its strict tribal hierarchy). After 2001 many of these powerbrokers were again marginalised with the comeback of former jihadi commanders, quite a few of whom belonged to the old Durrani Zirak tribes (though it should be noted that by 2001 more than two decades of war had weakened tribal leaders, and many of the jihadi commanders, including those featuring in the Uruzgan and Helmand case studies below, were self-made men and not from the old tribal establishment).[497]

Long-running conflicts entered into a new phase, and were heavily influenced by the distribution of resources (money, weapons, government positions) by U.S. Special Operation Forces hunting the Taliban and al-Qaeda, and by President Karzai. Karzai (a Popalzai) sought to boost the profile of allied Popalzai strongmen, many of them former jihadi commanders, against former Barakzai and Achekzai jihadi commanders seeking a position in the new government. This anti-Barakzai and anti-Achekzai agenda of the Karzai faction was clearly visible in Uruzgan, Helmand and, though not studied here, Kandahar. Whereas in Uruzgan the president could count on the support of Popalzai strongman Jan Mohammad and his nephew Matiullah, in Helmand there were few Popalzai and he allied himself with Alizai strongman Sher Mohammad Akhundzada. In Uruzgan SOF tended to follow Karzai's lead in choosing their main partners for military operations, but in Helmand they followed a different course and supported Barakzai powerbrokers.[498]

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[497] Anand Gopal argues that in Kandahar powerbrokers from the Ghilzai tribes and the Panjpaj Durrani tribes and –sub-tribes, some of whom had been empowered during the Taliban regime, were weakened. Strongmen of the Zirak Durrani tribes, the traditional elite were strengthened. However, the Taliban should not be seen as a primarily tribal movement, according to Gopal, who points to the diverse membership of the movement. These findings are supported by research for this thesis in Uruzgan and Helmand, both part of 'Greater Kandahar': 200; 201; 202; 203; 205; 210; 212; 213; 215; 223; 224; 236; 232; 528; Gopal, "The Battle for Afghanistan," 11, 12.
[498] 200; 201; 204; 212; 213; 224; 419; 431; 418; 400; 402; 303; 549.

Already in 2004 recruitment for the insurgency was gathering pace. It was managed from Quetta, where Taliban leaders were reorganising. Exploiting safe havens in Pakistan – whose military establishment was looking for a way to regain its influence in Afghanistan – Taliban leaders reached out to marginalised powerbrokers and communities. Many, though by no means all, had previously supported the Taliban regime.[499] That the insurgency against the Karzai government and its international allies started in the south is unsurprising given that Greater Kandahar had been the Taliban heartland, making it relatively easy for the movement's leaders to revive their networks, whereas in the northeast their footprint had always been more limited. Also, in the south new powerbrokers' targeting of former Taliban and personal rivals who they conveniently labelled as Taliban was continuously fuelled by resources from foreign military and international companies implementing reconstruction projects; resources that were much less available to powerbrokers in the northeast.

DDR programmes reinforced this dynamic of the exclusion of certain powerbrokers and their patronage networks from local political orders. Both DDR and DIAG offered the political establishment the opportunity to have their rivals disarmed and demobilised, thus rendering them vulnerable. The Taliban reintegration programmes, PTS and APRP, offered local elites the opportunity to capture resources that were meant for excluded local powerbrokers, and thus strengthen their own position instead. Uruzgan and Helmand are, in different ways, clear examples of the adverse effects of DDR in the midst of conflict.

5.2. Uruzgan Province

5.2.1. DDR – the case of Jan Mohammad and Matiullah

[499] ICG, "Talking about Talks," 9. On Pakistan's role in the insurgency see Abubakar Siddique, "Aziz admits Pakistan housing Taliban Leaders," *Dawn*, March 3, 2016; Quie, "Peacebuilding and Democracy Promotion," 562; "Key Quotes From the Document", *BBC*, September 28, 2006 (available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/newsnight/5388426.stm); Omer Aziz, "The ISI's Great Game in Afghanistan," *The Diplomat*, June 9, 2014; Claudio Franco, "The Evolving Taleban: Changes in the Insurgency's DNA," *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, May 19, 2013.

Uruzgan illustrates how formal and informal DDR could be used by powerbrokers with support from political patrons in Kabul and international military to sideline rivals and strengthen their own position. Jan Mohammad, a former jihadi commander from the Popalzai tribe who had reportedly once saved the life of Hamid Karzai (also a Popalzai), was in the comfortable position after 2001 of having both the support of the new president and of SOF operating in the province. He had however been absent from the province for years because he had been a prisoner of the Taliban in Kandahar. Thus, once Karzai had negotiated his release with the high-level Taliban figures he was meeting in Kandahar in December 2001, he needed to secure his position as Uruzgan's main powerbroker.

The main competition came from former jihadi commanders from the Achekzai and Barakzai elite tribes, who outnumbered the Popalzai in Uruzgan. In Jan Mohammad's absence, Karzai had turned to some of these powerbrokers when he came to Uruzgan in October 2001 (and Jan Mohammad was still in a Taliban jail) to start a 'tribal uprising' against the Taliban with U.S. support (an endeavour that met with little success until U.S. airstrikes started). After Karzai became president in December 2001 and the AMF was established in the following year, he rewarded these men with the command of Uruzgan's AMF 593 Brigade and the police force. Jan Mohammad was appointed as provincial governor, a position he had held during Burhanuddin Rabbani's government in the early 1990s.[500]

With Karzai's backing he made sure that he appointed loyal district governors. In non-Popalzai areas he cleverly adopted a policy of divide and rule by nominating friendly powerbrokers from the Achekzai, Barakzai and other tribes, which triggered internal conflicts as those that felt more entitled to those jobs were dissatisfied. In the security sector the DDR programme came to his aid. The programme was rolled out

[500] In spite of his civilian position he also commanded various militias. Estimations of the size of Jan Mohammad' militias vary from 800 men according to Van Bijlert in *Decoding the Taliban* to 2000 according to a "Commander Chart" of the DIAG programme dated 25 January 2005 (unpublished). The Liaison Office estimated in 2006 in an unpublished survey for the Dutch Embassy in Kabul that the Popalzai made up 10,5 per cent of the local population, the Barakzai 9 per cent and the Achekzai 35 per cent. The latter two tribes (who are thought to have once been one tribe, and whose members still often work together) are thus together much bigger than the Popalzai in Uruzgan.

in Uruzgan in 2004 after Jan Mohammad had already headed informal rounds of disarmament in previous years, during which, according to some sources, he had managed to obtain useable weapons from the 593 Brigade led by former jihadi commander Sultan Mohammad Barakzai and left them the unusable ones. The official DDR programme disbanded three AMF-units, while a fourth one, around 200 to 300 fighters under command of Jan Mohammad's nephew Matiullah, was left intact and rebranded as Highway Police.[501]

Former shopkeeper and taxi-driver Matiullah, at that time in his early thirties, had little fighting experience. He had been too young during the jihad. Under the Taliban regime he had been conscripted and sent to other parts of Afghanistan to fight, but as a lowly foot soldier. But now, with his uncle in a powerful position, he quickly climbed the provincial security sector ladder, at the expense of the more battle-hardened Barakzai and Achekzai commanders. The DDR programme was pivotal in this process.

Former Barakzai and Achekzai AMF commanders hold bitter memories from DDR. 'DDR was a political move', says one. 'It was a programme against the Pashtuns in general and specifically against these two tribes. Our kandaks were disbanded and we became unemployed. But the president and Jan Mohammad Khan gave permission to Matiullah Khan to change his kandak into Highway Police, so he could keep his weapons'.[502]

Police chief Rozi Khan, a former jihadi commander and member of the Barakzai tribe, was dealt with during the police reform in 2006, when President Karzai fired him and tried to have him replaced by Matiullah.[503] However, in that year the Dutch government deployed troops to Uruzgan as part of the expanding ISAF-mission and not only insisted that Jan Mohammad be removed from his position as governor

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[501] Outside the central areas that were directly under his control, like the provincial capital, Jan Mohammad often relied on allies from other tribes, ruling by dividing them; 218; 532; 419. See also Gopal, *No Good Men*, 119.
[502] 224.
[503] 431. The police pay and rank the reform process started in 2005 and aimed at "reducing the top-heavy officer class while vetting and testing five tiers." ICG, "Reforming Afghanistan's Police," *International Crisis Group*, August 2007, 12. Rozi Khan was accidentally killed by Australian forces in 2008.

(President Karzai appointed him as 'tribal adviser' in Kabul instead), but also vetoed Karzai's initiative for Matiullah to become Uruzgan's next police chief. This was indicative of the way DDR and SSR often worked: it was not the procedures of a programme but rather Afghan and international actors that decided what happened to whom. The most powerful local powerbrokers were able to get rid of rivals through these mechanisms. Despite not becoming the provincial police chief until after the departure of the Dutch from Uruzgan in 2010, Matiullah would become one of the ten most influential commanders in Afghanistan, according to former DIAG officials, through the combined support of the Karzai family and the foreign forces in Uruzgan.[504]

5.2.2. Growing insurgency, the PTS and informal Taliban reintegration

The PTS programme was a response to a growing insurgency in the southern Pashtun areas from 2004 onwards, including in Uruzgan. Local support for the expanding insurgency was driven by the exclusive and predatory new provincial government, which could operate with impunity because of the support it enjoyed from foreign forces and President Karzai.

Those who had been marginalised by Jan Mohammad through various means, including the first DDR programme and informal disarmament, or badly treated by his militias, often looked to the Taliban. Village or family feuds further fuelled the insurgency, as did other dynamics. Ideological considerations played a role but were often secondary to more pragmatic grievances. The growing insurgency in Uruzgan was further facilitated by the fact that many Taliban leaders came from the province and by its general socio-economic backwardness, with the central government having

[504] A U.S. Embassy Cable called Matiullah in 2006 a 'semi-literate' former militia commander who 'operates protection rackets, skims from the AHP [Afghanistan Highway Police] payroll and is involved in the narcotics trade'. At the same time, the cable continued, Matiullah was 'particularly adept as Taliban fighter', concluding: 'For this reason we may need to support his retention as AHP Chief to the short-term, in the interest of stability, but he will need to be replaced once the political situation in Uruzgan has become more stable'. U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan, "PRT/Tarin Kowt – Security Programs". According to a former DIAG official Matiullah appeared on a short list of the ten most influential commanders in Afghanistan in 2007: 302.

seemingly neglected it after it came to power in 2001, leaving many young men unemployed or underemployed.

As the Taliban's presence grew, communities in areas under its control often had to join; not from their own will but to survive. A tribal elder from Mehrabad, an area east of Tirin Kot, a former hotbed of the insurgency explained: 'Once the Taliban had established a foothold in our area, thousands of them came in and out [this is probably an exaggeration; the numbers would have been in the hundreds]. It became a centre for the Taliban. They became so strong in Mehrabad that they started beating people who did not cooperate, even executing them'.[505]

The insurgency in Uruzgan stayed relatively consistent in its composition over the decade, with its core members hailing from the same armed networks Jan Mohammad and Matiullah targeted after 2001. Jan Mohammad dealt with his powerful Achekzai and Barakzai rivals mostly through political manoeuvrings, as explored above, and the insurgency in their areas Khas Uruzgan, Gizab and Chora started later than elsewhere; mainly driven by sub-tribal conflicts some of which had been fuelled by

[505] 213. Some analysts, including Thomas Ruttig and Martine van Bijlert, suggest that the Taliban follow a model of concentric circles with an inner ring of indoctrinated and highly ideological madrassa students and an outer ring of local fighters who have joined the movement for a variety of non-ideological reasons. Van Bijlert, "Unruly Commanders," 159; Thomas Ruttig, "Die Taleban nach Mullah Dadullah," *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik*, June 2007, 2-3. This thesis takes the view that locals join the Taliban mostly join for non-ideological reasons but that ideology can become a more powerful motivation as they become embedded in the organisation. This view is based on interviews for this thesis (212; 213; 200; 419; 204; 013; 324; 332; 333) and on other studies in southern Afghanistan. A Department of International Development study found that religious messages did have resonance for the majority of the respondents, who talked about a western 'crusade' against Islam and Afghan traditions. 'However, our assessment is that this is primarily because they were couched in terms of respondents' two more pragmatic grievances: the corruption of the state and the occupation by foreign forces'. In addition, most radicalisation 'appears to happen after young men join a Taliban group'; Sarah Ladbury and Cooperation for Peace and Unity, "Hypotheses on Radicalisation in Afghanistan; Why Do Men Join the Taliban and Hizb-i-Islami? How Much Do Local Communities Support Them?," Study commissioned by Department of International Development (DFID), 2009, 7, 11, 16 and 17. Anand Gopal points out that initially it was not the existence of the Afghan government or the presence of the foreign troops that drove Taliban leaders back to the insurgency, but their behaviour; Anand Gopal, "The Taliban in Kandahar," in *Talibanistan: Negotiating the Borders Between Terror, Politics and Religion*, ed. Peter Bergen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 29.

Jan Mohammad's divide and rule tactics.[506] He took a different approach to the weaker commanders in the Ghilzai areas of Mehrabad and Darafshan in the Tirin Kot district and in the Panjpai areas of Char Chineh and Deh Rawod. From the beginning of his rule he labelled them as Taliban to U.S. forces – knowing those forces would target them – and used the imperative of disarming Taliban commanders as an excuse to raid their homes (Jan Mohammad proudly described himself as a 'governor in flak jacket'[507]). Many of those targeted were not former Taliban, and of those that were most seemed willing to disarm voluntarily by handing in weapons to the governor, his proxies in the districts, or a trusted tribal elder who could plead their case with him.[508]

However, Jan Mohammad and his men kept harassing them, sometimes together with SOF, who had little idea of local politics and let themselves be guided by Jan Mohammad's intelligence. 'All these Taliban became ordinary people but because of Jan Mohammad and the foreigners they had to escape to Pakistan', said a tribal elder.[509]

A tribal elder from the Hotak tribe in Mehrabad recalls:

> Mullah Qaher and Mullah Razaq [two Taliban commanders from Mehrabad] secretly came to our village and stayed here. They sent us [the interviewee and another elder from the village] a message that we should talk with Jan Mohammad on their behalf. They said that the only thing they wanted was to be safe. They promised to live like normal civilians and to not resort to any violence. We went to Jan Mohammad and shared the message with him. I told Jan Mohammad that if he would agree to this it would prevent them going to Pakistan. I asked his view. Jan Mohammad said that he would let us know by 8 am the next morning. However, right after our discussion he sent his forces to Mullah Qaher and Mullah Razaq's houses and raided them. Both mullahs escaped and did not come back. This was the beginning of insurgency in Mehrabad.[510]

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506 419; 431; 218; Van Bijlert, "Unruly Commanders," 158.
507 Derksen, "The Politics," 23.
508 200; 201; 212; 213; 214; 227; 564. Jan Mohammad seems to also have tried to brand the main Achekzai/Barakzai powerbrokers as Taliban, but was generally less successful there.
509 419.
510 084.

Particularly haunting for former Taliban commanders was the fate of Mullah Pai Mohammad, who had also surrendered to the government and had reportedly handed in around sixty weapons. In spite of Jan Mohammad' promises that he would be safe, he was harassed and his home was raided. According to two elders from the area he had started fighting the government due to his continual harassment, and was wounded in an air strike. Then he was shot and killed, and his body was hanged in Tirin Kot, according to the tribal elders 'to show people that they should not resist the government'.[511] In short, local Taliban saw that they had no place in the new political order, while at the same time their former leaders were reorganising in Pakistan.

The insurgency could also draw from the alienation of powerbrokers who had not supported the Taliban regime but were bullied by Jan Mohammed and his allies, usually because of tribal issues or competition over land and opium. In Deh Rawod district Khalifa Sadat, district governor and Jan Mohammad ally, competed with Haji Gholam Nabi over who would lead the Babozai tribe. Their rivalry dated back to the anti-Soviet jihad. Eventually Ghulam Nabi had managed to become the leader. That changed in early 2002, when Jan Mohammad was appointed as governor. He started backing Khalifa Sadat, probably in order to weaken the Babozai. 'Khalifa Sadat came to Gholam's house every day and eventually the police and the army arrested him and took him to Bagram', says one former government official from Deh Rawod. 'When he came back he started supporting the Taliban, even though he had not been with the Taliban before'.[512]

In other instances militias connected to Jan Mohammad harassed locals. Many of these worked as Afghan Security Guards (militia) for SOF, which signalled to locals that they enjoyed the support of the U.S. and could act with impunity. For example in Deh Rawod, a group connected to Jan Mohammad and Matiullah that included Afghan Security Guards commanders and local government officials, used U.S. support to hunt rival powerbrokers and thus expand their poppy business, by labelling their competitors Taliban.

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[511] 213. Also 212. In another example, Janan Agha, a former Taliban governor, had married into the Barakzai and was able to live for some time near Tirin Kot under protection of police commander Rozi Khan. But when Rozi Khan was fired in May 2006 this protection fell away and he went to Pakistan. 419; 212; 213; 528.
[512] 210.This story is confirmed by others; 229; 232.

The case of Mullah Anwar is illustrative. He was the owner of Deh Rawod bazaar, a centre of the drugs trade flowing through Deh Rawod, which was located on a major trafficking route in southern Afghanistan, and thus was an attractive target for Jan Mohammad's allies. In what was according to sources a set up an improvised explosive device was found near his house in 2008 and he was held responsible. SOF and Afghan Security Guards raided his house. Mullah Anwar, who reportedly had no previous links with the Taliban, then reportedly joined the insurgency. In another example, Mullah Abdul Wali from a village near Deh Rawod, reportedly had an argument with Jan Mohammad about tax on his poppy production. In the ensuing fight his brother was killed by militia connected to Jan Mohammad. He subsequently joined the Taliban (and was killed in August 2008).[513]

In other cases powerbrokers pressured by Jan Mohammad simply left their area, leaving the Taliban free to enter. A former jihadi commander and prominent member of the Tohki tribe in Dahrafshan recalls that Jan Mohammad disarmed him, but didn't believe he had fully disarmed and put him in prison, where he was tortured.

> I had come back to Uruzgan from exile after the fall of the Taliban to work for Karzai, but I saw that everything was divided between a single family and that the new government was taking revenge from its tribal rivals. When Jan Mohammad released me from prison my brother and I left for Pakistan. We stayed for six years.[514]

All in all, Jan Mohammad's governorship saw many rival powerbrokers either killed, flee their area leaving it open for Taliban to enter and revive their networks, or join

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513 326; 329; 076. SOF operating in Uruzgan in the early years after 2001 seemed to have little knowledge of the local conflict dynamics. The ASG or ASF (Afghan Security Force – meaning the same as ASG, Afghan Security Guards) provided base security and also often acted as a source of intelligence and assisted in military operations. About the close relationship between the ASF and the American troops former U.S. Department of State political adviser to the American PRT Daniel Green writes: 'The ASF (…) were very much part of our life'. Daniel R. Green, *The Valley's Edge: A year with the Pashtuns in the Heartland of the Taliban* (Sterling: Potomac Books, 2012), 24.

514 200. Other sources claimed that the family, while it had not been supporting the Taliban regime, started actively supporting the Taliban after Jan Mohammad had mistreated them. 528; 548.

the insurgency. Once they had fled or become insurgents, winning them back to the side of the government was difficult. From 2005 onwards a series of Taliban reintegration efforts under the umbrella of the PTS and later the APRP have attempted to do so, as have informal attempts by foreign troops, local officials and tribal elders. But without a fundamental change at the international, national and local levels towards a more politically inclusive and just government, it was difficult to convince insurgents to lay down their weapons.

By 2006 foreign troops in Uruzgan had become more aware of the destabilising effects of Jan Mohammad's rule. Relations between him and the SOF cooled – although the Americans would remain very close to his nephew Matiullah. When the Dutch government deployed troops to Uruzgan, they conditioned the deployment in the summer of 2006 on Jan Mohammad's removal (he was assassinated in Kabul in 2011). His replacement Mullah Hakim Munib, a former Taliban deputy minister, was a positive change, according to elders from marginalised Ghilzai tribes, who say he reached out to them. Munib said about the challenges:

> In Uruzgan, we had two major issues to deal with. One was reintegration of Taliban and the second was tribal differences and disputes. Tribal feuds had paved the ground for insecurity. If one tribe was friendly with the government, the rival tribe was against the government. As I got appointed, I managed to bring unity among tribes.[515]

However, the broader political context remained adverse to Taliban members laying down their weapons. While the governor and the PTS programme aimed to reintegrate low-level insurgents, neither the national government nor its international allies had tried to engage the Taliban leadership in peace talks.

The complicated and fragile local security situation was clear after the arrival of the Dutch troops in Uruzgan, and their establishment of Kamp Holland in Tirin Kot. To take only the examples shown above, by then former Taliban commanders like Mullah Qaher and Mullah Razaq mentioned earlier had rejoined their former

[515] Derksen, "The Politics," 24. Other sources support his claim that Munib tried to include some marginalised powerbrokers, though that he was to weak in this position to really change anything. 232; 212.

comrades and started fighting against the government in Mehrabad; the aforementioned powerbrokers of the Tokhi tribe in the area Dahrafshan just north of Tirin Kot had left for Pakistan and according to some had started collaborating with the Taliban, and in Deh Rawod Babozai powerbroker Gholam Nabi reportedly supported a large-scale Taliban offensive in the winter of 2007/2008, even though he had not supported them before 2001. These men had had all been harassed and marginalised by Jan Mohammad and his local allies.[516]

To make matters worse, Jan Mohammad also seemed intent on destabilising the province further from Kabul, to show that there could be no security without him at the helm in Uruzgan – similar tactics to those of Mir Alam and Amir Gul in the northeast, and those of Helmandi powerbrokers discussed in the next chapter. For example, in the spring of 2007 Haji Oibadullah, a Jan Mohammad loyalist and the district governor of Chora, fled as the Taliban approached the district north of Tirin Kot, leading to suspicions that he had invited insurgents on the order of his patron in Kabul.[517]

In response to the escalating violence, ISAF and Operation Enduring Freedom forces launched aggressive military operations. In this environment, persuading Taliban commanders to disarm and seek tribal unity was almost impossible. Munib gives an example:

> Malem Farooq was a Hizb-i-Islami commander in Khas Uruzgan when he joined the reconciliation programme [PTS]. His participation was accepted by the international forces and the government in Kabul and in Uruzgan. But when he came he was arrested and imprisoned in Bagram. He spent a month in Bagram and due to our efforts, we could get him out. He must be somewhere in Afghanistan now.[518]

In 2008 Munib was replaced by Governor Assadullah Hamdam, with the consent of Jan Mohammad, who held sway over him from Kabul. Governor Hamdam organised

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[516] 232.
[517] U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan, "PRT/Tarin Kowt: Governor Monib's Tenuous Grasp on Uruzgan Province," U.S. Embassy Cable 06KABUL2178, May 14, 2006. Published by *Wikileaks.org*. 431; 432; 218.
[518] Derksen, "The Politics," 25.

in 2008 a 'Peace Jirga' described in the introduction, attended by hundreds of tribal elders from the province. However, the majority were probably primarily connected with the local government rather than with the Taliban. As described, Matiullah provided security, and former governor Jan Mohammad played a prominent role in proceedings. During lunch at the governor's compound, he took the seat reserved for the governor at the head of the table, an important sign of who was the boss. A plea by an elder from the marginalised Hotak tribe in Mehrabad to the local government to stop targeting only their poppy fields for eradication and instead apply the same measures to everyone fell on deaf ears.[519]

Hamdam also claims to have reintegrated 252 low-level fighters under the PTS programme with support from the Dutch PRT, mostly by offering them jobs in Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development projects, which included building schools, bridges and roads. However, as Hamdam was widely seen as under the influence of Jan Mohammad, he was not able to reintegrate Taliban commanders.

There was direct and indirect contact between the foreign forces and some Taliban commanders. 'Foreign troops were negotiating independently with the Taliban', said Hamdam. 'For example, X was exchanging messages with the Dutch. I also heard that Y had links with Australians. Z was another Taliban commander who had contacts with the Americans. The foreign forces didn't share these things with us. I was not happy from this and neither was the [national] government.'[520]

The Dutch PRT, which was responsible for the Jan Mohammad's exit as governor, seems to have been especially keen on bringing in disenchanted powerbrokers and Taliban commanders. A tribal elder from Mehrabad recalls that the Dutch asked him to talk to a Taliban commander from the same tribe. 'They wanted to ask him to leave the area. I sent my brother to talk with him. He did not disturb our area after that'. In

519 Author's observation, March 2008 Tirin Kot.
520 Derksen, "The Politics," 25. Full names have been replaced with random letters for security reasons. Hamdam's assertions are confirmed by some of those involved in these contacts; 229; 548; 227; 238; 212; 213.

Deh Rawod the Dutch also made contact with a Babozai Taliban commander. He had joined the movement in 2007 after the Americans had raided his house.[521]

However, without the approval of the Americans the Dutch efforts soon faltered. Efforts to persuade disenchanted elders to return to Uruzgan from exile led to the return of Hashem Khan Tokhi and Mohammad Nabi Khan Tokhi, two tribal elders who had been wrongfully accused by Jan Mohammad of being Taliban in 2001. In June 2010, however, Hashem was killed in his village by local Taliban, possibly hired by others. Mohammad Nabi was still alive in 2014 and benefitted from a project asphalting a road from Tirin Kot to Chora, as well as other reconstruction projects. But a close family member, who also fled, said in a 2014 interview that the family was still furious with the local government, which was then dominated by Matiullah. 'The ruling people have succeeded in excluding all other tribes, including only one tribe and some individuals loyal to their interests'.[522]

In sum, local powerbrokers in Uruzgan as in other provinces, the support of foreign forces on the ground was a crucial factor in their access to power and resources in the post-2001 political order. Jan Mohammad's grip on Uruzgan politics would not have been possible without the support of the U.S.-led coalition troops in the first years after 2001. However, over time, especially after ISAF expanded to the south in 2006, the provincial PRT in Tirin Kot seemed to have become more aware of local political dynamics. This resulted in efforts to reintegrate Taliban commanders and foot soldiers, and to get tribal elders to return from exile, as shown above. Reconstruction projects were also implemented in insurgency-affected areas as an incentive to support the government.

However, even if some ISAF and U.S. officials realised what had gone wrong in Uruzgan and worked to achieve a more equitable distribution of power, it was difficult to fundamentally change anything for several reasons. First, they had different agendas regarding Taliban reintegration. While some Western officials

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[521] Name withheld for security reasons, but known by author. The Dutch efforts to get in touch with Taliban commanders is also confirmed by other sources, including in the Taliban; 354; 232; 227; 238; 212; 213.
[522] 200; Van Bijlert, "Zabul and Uruzgan," 123.

worked to establish a more inclusive local government, others were merely preoccupied with luring Taliban commanders off the battlefield with the goal of short-term stabilisation.

Second, there was a lack of consensus on how to proceed and a lack of coordination between different countries, and even between different departments within a country. Everyone had their own 'tribal darlings'. Australians and SOF worked with Matiullah's militias, but the U.S. Department of State was at times quite critical of him. The Dutch PRT officially didn't talk to him and even supported Barakzai powerbroker, Matiullah rival and former police chief Rozi Khan to become district chief of Chora in 2007. After Rozi Khan was accidentally killed by Australian forces in 2008, they supported the appointment of his son Daoud Khan (who was assassinated after the Dutch left in 2010 and the U.S. took over the PRT, showing the difficulty of shaping the local political arrangements when not everyone was on the same page).[523]

Third, although ISAF's mandate included extending the central government's authority in the provinces, in reality the PRT and President Karzai often clashed in their approach. While at first U.S. and Karzai's interests aligned, when the Dutch arrived in 2006, forced Jan Mohammad's removal as governor and vetoed Matiullah's appointment to provincial police chief, a gap opened up between the president's interests and those of the PRT. Karzai continued to support Matiullah and, most of all, Jan Mohammad, who actively sought to destabilise Uruzgan. Karzai also did not support foreign initiatives to talk with Taliban commanders, perhaps feeling that it undermined his own leverage with the movement.

Last and most important, while the expansion of ISAF to the provinces after 2003 resulted in lead-nations wanting to put their own stamp on 'their' areas, the broader national and international environment limited what they could achieve. In Uruzgan nothing fundamental would change without political changes in Kabul towards a more inclusive government. This was partly dependent on the nature of the international intervention that included a military campaign against the Taliban but not a strategy to

[523] Author's personal observation, March 2008, Tirin Kot. Susanne Schmeidl, "Matiullah's Dream Come True," *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, August 8, 2011.

politically accommodate insurgent leaders. As a former senior provincial-level official said: 'Uruzgan is just one among many provinces. There was no strategy for peace either at the local level, the national level or the international level. This was a big obstacle'.[524]

5.2.3. DIAG – the case of Matiullah

On 18 January 2007 Matiullah handed in 264 weapons under the DIAG programme. This happened shortly after the disbandment of the Highway Police in Afghanistan in 2006, and was thus presumably meant to mark the end of his job as highway commander, six months after the Dutch troops' arrival in Uruzgan. At that time he commanded around 370 men. Official statistics logged this as a successful case of disbandment, and the ANBP paraded his participation proudly in its monthly newsletter. DIAG's managers had included Matiullah in their top ten most influential commanders in Afghanistan so his participation in the programme seemed a great achievement.[525]

In reality nothing much changed for Matiullah. When asked in an interview in 2013 about his participation in DIAG he said he did not remember it. He had little reason to. He and his men were not genuinely disarmed. Some of the weapons he handed in were so old that an American officer reportedly asked to take an antique Enfield rifle home with him as a souvenir. For commanders like Matiullah, participating in DIAG was a way to get registered as having had their militias disbanded, while continuing business as usual, according to a former DIAG official. In some ways, it was thus a

[524] 432.
[525] 502; 244; 528, Afghanistan New Beginnings Programme, "ANBP newsletter issue 5," *United Nations*, January 2007, see also Derksen "The Politics". The American embassy in Kabul wrote in a 2006 cable 'The Afghan National Police (ANP) and Afghan Highway Police (AHP) were thinly disguised militias with primary loyalty to their former mujahideen commanders'. U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan, "PRT Tarin Kowt – Governor Monib's Militia," U.S. Embassy Cable ID 06KABUL5421, November 10, 2006. Published by *Wikileaks.org*. The Afghan Highway Police (AHP) was disbanded nationwide because of the 'massive rates of corruption'. Cyrus Hodes and Mark Sedra, "The Search for Security in Post-Taliban Afghanistan," *International Institute for Strategic Studies*, 2007, 39.

convenient charade for all sides. Matiullah could claim to have participated, and DIAG officials could log him as a successful case.[526]

Foreign troops in Uruzgan also had a keen interest in not changing the status quo, especially as violence increased. Matiullah thus continued as de-factor highway commander on the Kandahar – Tirin Kot road. His main job was to protect military and civilian convoys against Taliban attacks. Many sources, including at the Dutch-led PRT, suspected him of running a protection racket and organising attacks when someone tried to organise their own protection. His control over that road made him a rich man, as everyone paid him handsomely. This included the Dutch government, which officially denied having anything to do with him.[527]

To create the impression that his armed group was a legal outfit Matiullah's militia was renamed Kandak-e Amniat-e Uruzgan (KAU). The Dutch government wrote in 2011:

> Since 2007 the men of Matiullah Khan (the *Kandak Amniante Uruzgan* – KAU) did not formally exist and should be part of the Afghan police. In practice Matiullah Khan's men functioned like a militia that controlled the main roads in and to Uruzgan and which helped him to generate a high income. The men were not controlled by the Afghan government. At the national political level there was unfortunately not enough Afghan political will and courage to put an end to the militia of Matiullah Khan and the way was free for him to continue with his own policy and activities.[528]

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[526] 502.

[527] His income from providing security to foreign military convoys was estimated at some $340,000 each month (based on the report that Matiullah protected 200 trucks per month going from Kandahar to Camp Holland near Tirin Kot for $1,700 per truck). According to informed observers other sources of income were opium, construction companies in the name of relatives and getting paid for 'ghost soldiers'. An U.S. embassy cable from 2006 stated: 'Credible accounts indicate that Matiollah operates protection rackets, skims from the AHP's payroll and is involved in the illegal narcotics trade'. U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan, "PRT/Tarin Kowt – Security Programs Getting Traction in Uruzgan Province," U.S Embassy Cable 06KABUL1669, April 12, 2006. Published by *Wikileaks.org*; see also Schmeidl "The Man Who Would Be King"; 2012; Jeremy Kelly, "The Long Road to Tarin Kowt", *The Australian*, 28 April 2009; Bette Dam, "The Story of 'M': US-Dutch Shouting Matches in Uruzgan", *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, July 10, 2010; 531; 548; 530.

[528] Translated from Dutch by the author. "Eindevaluatie Nederlandse bijdrage aan ISAF, 2006-2010," *Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken en Ministerie van Defensie*, 23

This lack of 'Afghan political will' was only part of the explanation of Matiullah's ability to continue his armed activities despite of not having official status as security provider. Foreign forces, apart from being dependent on him to keep their convoys safe, disagreed on how to deal with him. The Dutch PRT officially wanted nothing to do with him, and had vetoed his appointment as police chief in 2006, as mentioned above. On the other hand, SOF, who still operated in Uruzgan and whose main base was next to Camp Holland in Tirin Kot, saw in him an energetic and effective Taliban hunter. While they had given up Jan Mohammad, they continued supporting Matiullah, who was much more attuned to the demands of foreigners than his uncle. In sum, individual actors, President Karzai, the Dutch PRT and the U.S. troops, followed their own, often competing, agendas instead of DDR or DIAG procedures. The end result was that Matiullah's network continued to exist, even expand, but moved into the informal sphere, beyond the control of government institutions.[529]

Matiullah's assistance to SOF operations against the Taliban meant that he could expand his influence province-wide. His transition from highway commander to provincial powerbroker was also facilitated by Jan Mohammad's transfer to Kabul in 2006. Matiullah gradually took over Jan Mohammad's network, which included the Afghan Security Guards working alongside SOF in various parts of the province, and reorganised it to include personal allies.

The top tier of his illegal armed network became dominated by Popalzai from his own village. In a second tier he included Barakzai and Achekzai commanders, replicating Jan Mohmmad's divide-and-rule policy. He included however few Ghilzai and Panjpai commanders, who continued to be marginalised. Although he did include a

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september 2011, 56. "Final evaluation of the Dutch contribution to ISAF, 2006-2010," *Dutch Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence*, September 23, 2011), 56.

[529] 420; 550. Around 2008 the Dutch government and MoI minister Hanif Atmar looked at bringing Matiullah's militia fully under MoI control, but came to the conclusion that it would be too expensive (531). Apparently at this point Matiullah also resisted institutional oversight, preferring instead to remain independent, just like his fellow-militiamen Mir Alam in Kunduz and Amir Gul in Baghlan. Dexter Filkins, "With US Aid, Warlord Builds Afghan Empire," *The New York Times*, June 5, 2010).

few of Jan Mohammad's old allies, Matiullah's network, which thus centred around friends from his village, became even more exclusionary than Jan Mohammad's, who had relied on the old province-wide jihadi network. Again, international military support and political backing from Kabul enabled a provincial powerbroker to establish a predatory and exclusive rule.[530]

The Dutch troops's departure from Uruzgan in 2010 left the way free for Matiullah to become provincial police chief. His appointment, in 2011, merely formalised his expansive informal powers in the security sector. Despite being provincial police commander, he retained a militia of 800 men outside the MoI structure, until 2014.[531] He further strengthened his dominance in the security sector by disarming rivals informally, or preventing them from getting weapons, thus employing the same tactics as his uncle Jan Mohammad who had also used the DDR programme for this purpose. Several tribal elders saw their contingents of bodyguards reduced when Matiullah believed their loyalty lacking. One complained that Matiullah had prevented President Karzai from giving him permission to form a 300-men militia in his area. Matiullah also disarmed his own commanders if they had fallen from grace – for example by becoming too powerful – knowing they could not survive long against Taliban revenge attacks.[532]

He also exerted considerable informal influence over the civilian administration, and most appointments in the local government had to be approved by him. For example, when the provincial council chairman did not closely follow his agenda, he ensured his replacement with a loyalist. He even ousted a provincial governor Amir Mohammad Akhunzda who competed with him on 'the signing of contracts' for construction work according to local sources; in other words a rival for bribes from contractors eager to win the contracts.[533]

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[530] 200; 201; 203; 205; 210; 211; 212; 213; 229.
[531] In 2014 Matiullah claimed that the MoI – presumably with the 2014 presidential elections in mind – paid for all his men, including 950 of the 1583 ANP that he still used as highway police. In addition to the ANP he oversaw the ALP, which numbered 2250 men according to Matiullah and 2000 according to a representative of the ALP headquarters. 244; 002.
[532] 200; 210; 522; 542; 418; 205; 230, 228; 226; 419.
[533] 213; 204; 201; 210; 232; 200; 229; 236; 211; 522.

President Karzai at that time openly deliberated if he should fire Matiullah. Perhaps this was only an empty gesture to the ousted provincial governor, who was a brother of his long-time ally senator Sher Mohammad Akhundzada from Helmand. It is therefore unclear how serious he was about firing him, but Matiullah's continued tenure as provincial police chief could be interpreted as a sign that the central government had little influence over an increasingly powerful provincial strongman with his expansive formal and informal powers. In any case, the successor to the ousted governor seemed more pliable.[534]

By 2013, however, Matiullah, in his new role as police chief, appeared to have made Uruzgan more secure than at any other point in the previous years. A tribal elder from Mehrabad, who claimed that his men deliberately drove over four villagers in 2002 and had usually been extremely critical of Matiullah since we first met in 2006, said:

> The Taliban are at the gates. If you bring in a weak commander they can come in. We need someone strong to defend us, to be like a dictator. When we are sure that the security is fine we can ask for an educated man.[535]

This sentiment was shared by many interviewees in 2013 and 2014, including some of Matiullah's long-time enemies. On the surface it seemed that his reign had led to more local stability. Not only did he keep the Taliban out, his men also were no longer seen to be torturing or killing innocent people as they had in the early years after 2001. He even issued apologies for his previous behaviour and established a provincial *shura* to mediate in local disputes; the *shura* included many Achekzai, Barakzai, Panjpai and Ghilzai powerbrokers. In other words, his inclusion into the government appeared to have led not only to improved security but also to a more inclusive and less predatory style of governance.

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534 226; 229; 210; 227.

535 213. The villagers in the 2002 event were killed, according to the tribal elder. His story was confirmed by a villager who was interviewed separately and said he had also witnessed this event, which he described in the same way; 223.

However, below the surface a different picture emerged. Many interviewees said that part of the reason why the province was more secure, was because Matiullah himself had ceased destabilising it. A local official said:

> It was a good idea for Matiullah to become police commander. He would not allow anyone else. With someone else he would create insecurity to show that he should be the commander. He would cooperate with the opposition. Now he is a police chief the situation is stable. When he was not a police chief the security was very bad. Now it is better.[536]

In interviews with locals it also became clear that Matiullah's rule in reality was no less predatory or exclusionary than before. His new profile was more about optics than genuine change. Soon after he had become police chief he disbanded the provincial shura, claiming a lack of money. Shura participants suspected him of having used it as a tool to claim local legitimacy in his bid for the position, and said that in any case his followers in the shura had usually settled disputes in favour of Popalzai powerbrokers. Many interviewees claimed that Matiullah's men still tortured and killed innocent people, or that they made them 'disappear'. For example, in Mehrabad tribal elders claimed in 2013 that a particularly notorious commander Shah Mohammad had killed an unarmed man who was a personal rival and had no links to the Taliban, despite Shah Mohammad's claims to the contrary. Not long afterwards, Shah Mohammad was severely wounded when he drove on an IED, reportedly in retaliation for the killing of the unarmed villager.[537]

The government in Uruzgan was thus still the personal rule of a strongman with his clique of followers. Local Taliban were his rivals who had been excluded, and, in many cases, harassed. Disarmament, both through DDR programmes and through informal disarmament activities, had been key in this dynamic.

But even this was not the full story. Government officials, including Matiullah, also sometimes cooperated with the Taliban. Interviewees argued that 'everyone has his own Taliban', meaning that in the same manner everyone in the province tried to get into government they also had connections to the insurgency. Depending on the

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[536] 214.
[537] 212; 213; 206; 418; 232; 239; 528; 232; 200; 204; 236.

situation they used their connections, which often ran along tribal lines, to one side or the other to get what they wanted. As one tribal elder said: 'The Taliban are not outsiders, they are made of the tribes and people of Uruzgan. Every tribe has their own tribal Taliban'.[538]

When commander Shah Mohammad in Mehrabad had killed one of their own, villagers knew there was no hope of justice – Shah Mohammad *was* the law.[539] The only way to get some kind of justice was to organise a 'Taliban attack', laying the IED that wounded him. In short, whenever anyone needed to do anything that could not be done under the government label, they used the Taliban label.

Matiullah himself also had close ties to the insurgency, according to well-informed sources. 'Like everyone else', said a tribal elder. 'They are Popalzai Taliban from Kandahar'.[540] It gave him deniability when he wanted to do something illegal, according to a local official. As mentioned above foreign troops suspected Matiullah of using the Taliban to stage attacks on convoys that had not paid him protection money.[541]

In sum, the failure of the Afghan government and its international allies to bring local powerbrokers under institutional control owed much to their lack of interest in genuinely pursuing the disbandment of local militias or integrating them into the security forces. Instead they relied on some local strongmen while demobilising others. Powerbrokers on all sides used the threat of insecurity and alliances with the Taliban to pursue their personal interests.[542]

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538 233. Also 214; 200; 210; 528; 418; 236; 232.
539 Literally. In order to try and have a working relationship with Shah Mohammad the villagers had proposed a weekly *shura*; an idea he had accepted. During this weekly *shura* local disputes were settled, with Shah Mohammad in the role of judge. 212; 213; 215.
540 210. Also 214; 200; 210; 528; 418; 236.
541 232; 200; Dam, "Shouting Matches"; Filkins, "Warlords Builds Afghan Empire".
542 By the time Matiullah was appointed as provincial police chief, he had already amassed so much informal power that the central government had little influence over him.

Matiullah's example is instructive. His close alliance to SOF and patrons in Kabul and Kandahar meant he did not need to nurture local support and legitimacy, in contrast to what tribal leaders had traditionally needed to do in the years before the war. Like Karzai, Matiullah was 'a puppet of the foreigners', in the words of his Taliban enemies. His network was, therefore, not fully integrated in either the government or the local community. When he was assassinated in 2015, any temporary stability he may have brought to the province in previous years evaporated.

5.2.4. The APRP

In 2011, the year that Matiullah became the provincial police chief, the APRP was rolled out in Uruzgan. Three years later, by the end of the Karzai administration, the provincial peace council and its secretariat seemed to be in operation and included twenty-five elders and five support staff. The programme offered many incentives for Taliban to join the programme, according to the head of the secretariat, Amir Mohammad Muzafar. Transitional financial assistance was available, including special allowances for senior commanders ($200-400 a month). After the first phase temporary job opportunities were available to participants in development projects from the line ministries, such as the building of dams or mosques and road construction. Another APRP official also mentioned the ALP as a possible option. 'The ALP is a good place for them to be hired, because they know fighting'.[543]

In a poor province like Uruzgan, where many are unemployed or underemployed, such incentives should have seemed attractive. However, interviewees, including in the peace council, said that the number of Taliban that had laid down their weapons through informal channels was actually higher than the number that had gone through the APRP. According to the local secretariat the APRP reintegrated 137 Taliban commanders and fighters by spring 2014. But interviewees said that hundreds of Taliban rank and file had stopped fighting outside the programme, especially in areas around Tirin Kot. They received no benefits from the APRP, and had to find their own way back into their communities.[544]

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[543] 242; Derksen, "The Politics," 27.
[544] 235; 204; 212; 213.

Even the number of 137 APRP participants – significantly lower than in Kunduz and Baghlan – was disputed. 'I am Uruzgani, but no one knows them [the APRP participants] except for a few', said one tribal elder and member of the peace council. 'The programme is a failure.'[545] Matiullah also called the programme a failure and added: 'As far as I know, no more than ten real Taliban have joined. Some of the others are in the police force with us'.[546] There were allegations of fraud. A peace council member said: 'APRP officials make lists of ghost Taliban and send them to Kabul to get money'.[547] APRP officials denied this. They were, however, able to only name a few Taliban commanders; making the claim of 137 Taliban participating in the APRP dubious.[548]

Mullah Samad was the local poster child for the APRP in Uruzgan. He joined in 2012 with twenty-five fighters and then became an ALP commander in his district of Khas Uruzgan. But other APRP participants were less well looked after. An APRP participant from Shahidi Hassas district in western Uruzgan, claimed that he joined the programme with fifty-eight Taliban in 2012 but that he and his group were neglected. 'The government promised us a piece of land and employment but none of these promises were fulfilled. The government did nothing for us, apart from 15,000 Afghanis [around $220] that we were paid in the first three months. Honestly, we can't invite other Taliban that we know to come and join the peace programme, if the government doesn't keep its promises'.[549] According to local APRP officials, the participant introduced himself as a foot soldier to the programme, afraid to be prosecuted if he said he was a commander, and was therefore not eligible for more. The participant claimed police chief Matiullah gave him seventeen ALP positions, but that he took them away as the news of his reintegration faded away in the local

[545] 201.
[546] 244.
[547] 201.
[548] 242.
[549] 243.

media.[550] He sounded bitter and disillusioned when he spoke about the APRP. 'The government betrayed us'.[551]

While the APRP did not deliver on its promise of employment for everyone who joined, risks involved in joining were considerable. Most interviewees agreed that the lack of security guarantees was the APRP's most problematic aspect. 'The most important thing that insurgents want is security, and many times the government is unable to provide that', said a member of the peace council.[552] Another member explained that this was the reason why the APRP attracted fewer Taliban than informal channels: 'Going through the peace council [the APRP] is risky because of the media. They think that exposure in the media puts their life in danger. They don't want to risk their life for the small amount of money that the peace council pays them. Their AK-47 is far more expensive'.[553] APRP participant Akhundzada said: 'We are between two rocks: the government on one side and the Taliban on the other. They both cause insecurity. We want protection'.[554]

Akhundzada's concerns about his security exposed a structural problem that the APRP could not resolve and that affected other provinces too. As long as the Taliban leadership was not on board with the reintegration of its rank and file, it would keep targeting APRP participants – threatening their safety. But at the same time the local government was also not going to facilitate the real reintegration of Taliban commanders and fighters in the security forces, which would have been the only way to keep them safe in the midst of conflict – as the example of Matiullah and Akhundzada and the ALP shows. As long as Matiullah was in charge he would resist appointing rival commanders and fighters in the ALP or the ANP. This was the logical place for reintegrating Taliban; especially outside the province's centre. As the

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[550] 242. Also 204; 235. See also Mujib Mashal and Taimoor Shah, "Taliban Gun Down a 10-Year Old Militia Hero," *The New York Times*, February 2, 2016.
[551] 243. Also 204; 235. See also Mujib Mashal and Taimoor Shah, "Taliban Gun Down a 10-Year Old Militia Hero," *The New York Times*, February 2, 2016.
[552] 204.
[553] 212.
[554] 241.

previous section showed, though Matiullah had made some cosmetic changes to include marginalised powerbrokers, in reality little had changed.[555]

When asked about the APRP, interviewees recited the names of local commanders who had joined the insurgency because they had been marginalised and harassed by Jan Mohammad, Matiullah and their sub-commanders. They emphasised that these were local people, who should be accommodated in the local political order and who would create trouble as long as they were not. But they also said that there was little chance of political accommodation as long as Matiullah was in power and had filled the local administration with his followers. As one tribal elder and peace council member said: 'Even in the provincial peace council there are people who say that Taliban should be killed on the spot, because they have killed one of their relatives. Such comments stop any progress in the peace efforts'.[556]

Most interviewees added that shifts in the local power structure could only come about through changes in the wider political environment, specifically in Kabul. Many also mentioned Pakistan's influence and that it needs to make peace with the United States. 'The Taliban are used and manipulated by regional countries, particularly Pakistan', said one tribal elder.[557] 'The leadership is not in Uruzgan'. A member of the Peace Council said: 'The peace programme [the APRP] was a failure from the beginning. Peace is in the hands of Pakistan and the U.S., but neither of them want peace in Afghanistan'.[558]

Uruzgan is an example of a province where DDR, especially the first DDR programme and informal DDR efforts, served to concentrate power in the hands of one family and its patronage network by disarming their rivals, some of whom joined the insurgency. As long as this family remained in power and could resist sharing resources with its rivals thanks to backing from Kabul and international support,

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[555] Khas Uruzgan, where Mullah Samad was appointed as ALP commander, was in the periphery of Matiullah's influence. Moreover, in that particular district the tensions between the Pashtuns and Hazaras – which was not the case in other districts – could have made more attractive for Matiullah to appoint a Pashtun.
[556] 212.
[557] 201.
[558] 235.

reintegration programmes for Taliban would be unable to genuinely integrate insurgents into society. The fact that Taliban leaders had not given their consent, made joining the APRP programme a risky move for their rank and file. Most Taliban who wanted to lay down their weapons chose to do so quietly, without the media attention that came with the APRP. Much of the PTS and APRP resources thus ended up in the hands of the establishment.

DDR programmes that strengthened the predatory and exclusionary local political order responsible for much of the violence instead of integrating ex-combatants into civilian society and diminishing violence thus reflected the wider political context. With the U.S. prioritising counterinsurgency and counterterrorism over reconciliation with the Taliban, and Afghan allies such as President Karzai using this agenda to prop up loyal strongmen in the provinces, none of the DDR programmes could have fulfilled their official goals. Instead, the programmes became tools to further objectives in line with the real agendas of the most powerful actors, including President Karzai and U.S. forces. This was especially problematic in those areas, like southern Afghanistan, that they focused on right from the start, as the examples of Uruzgan and, in the next chapter, Helmand, show.

5.3. Helmand Province

5.3.1. DDR and DIAG – the case of Malem Mir Wali part 1

The initiation of DDR and DIAG programmes in Helmand, as well as attempts to reintegrate Taliban commanders and fighters, took place amid competition between powerbrokers over government positions, access to foreign funds, and domination of the poppy trade. After the Taliban's ouster in 2001, the best government positions in Helmand were distributed to four main strongmen who had risen to prominence during the anti-Soviet jihad. Sher Mohammad Akhundzada (from the Alizai tribe) became provincial governor; Abdul Rahman Jan (Noorzai) took over as police chief; Dad Mohammad (Alikozai) aka Amir Dado became chief of the National Security Directorate; and Malem Mir Wali (Barakzai) took charge of the 93rd AMF Division. The four competed fiercely with each other, employing every possible means, including denouncing rivals as Taliban to SOF and collecting bounties. Their

struggles, which manifested themselves in low-level violence rather than open warfare, became linked with the objectives and operations of foreign troops in the province, especially U.S. SOF (from 2003), the British Army (from 2006), and the American Marines (from 2009).[559]

In this context, disarmament was a major threat to the strongmen and their men, as rivals could use any resultant vulnerability to attack them. Staying armed was necessary at all costs, even if it meant joining or supporting the insurgency. The example of Barakzai power broker Malem Mir Wali and the resurgence of the Taliban in 'his' district, Nahr-e-Saraj, is instructive.[560]

A few weeks after the fall of Kabul in November 2001, Malem Mir Wali assumed command over what would become the 93rd Division, a collection of militias with its headquarters in Gereshk, the former capital of Helmand and a traditional stronghold of Barakzai power brokers. Malem Mir Wali, who had originally trained as a teacher (*malem*) in Kandahar, had fought with Hezb-e-Islami against the Soviets, like many of his fellow-tribesmen. Though Malem Mir Wali claimed that he was inspired by religious fervour when he joined Hezb-e Islami, the party's provision of weapons and other forms of support that could be used in local conflicts certainly played a role. His pragmatism was also clear from his switching sides and joining Najibullah government's National Reconciliation Programme when he faced pressure from his arch enemy Alizai leader Nasim Akhundzada, Sher Mohammad Akhundzada's uncle, who commanded the local Harakat-e Enqelab force. When the Taliban came to Helmand in the 1990s, Malem Mir Wali fled to Iran and later went to the Panjshir Valley, where he joined Jamiat's Shura-ye Nazar leader Ahmad Shah Massoud.[561]

He claims he was involved in the liberation of Kabul in November 2001 and Fahim

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559 The ISAF deployment increased from 3,300 British troops in 2006 to 30,000 troops from the United States, UK, Denmark, Georgia, and Estonia in 2010 and 2011. The Danish battle group was in command of the district Nahr-e-Saraj from 2007. Christian Dennys, *Military Intervention, Stabilisation and Peace: The Search for Stability* (New York: Routledge, 2014); Martin, *An Intimate War*, 123. See also Derksen, "The Politics".

560 The author is grateful to Mike Martin for his suggestion to explore this example.

561 342; 341; Deedee Derksen, "Armed, disarmed and rearmed: How Nar-e-Seraj in Helmand became one of the deadliest districts in Afghanistan," *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, January 6, 2014.

subsequently rewarded him with the command of the 93rd Division. Support from SOF in Helmand was also crucial for Malem Mir Wali's success in becoming division commander. In 2003 Malem Mir Wali's deputy Haji Kaduz's brother Idris and sixty members of the 93rd Division began to secure Camp Price, where SOF were based, and assist them in combat operations against the Taliban.[562]

Malem Mir Wali leaned heavily on his old Hezb-e Islami network and his own Barakzai clan for the recruitment of commanders and fighters for the 93rd Division. But the division was, nonetheless, a mixed group, including Ishaqzai and Noorzai commanders and commanders from other Barakzai clans. They had self-mobilised in 2001 and in several gatherings in Gereshk accepted Malem Mir Wali as their leader. It was a time of 'tribal rapprochement', in the words of former British officer and cultural adviser Mike Martin, who also points to the many Taliban fighters who had switched sides during the U.S.-led intervention in 2001 and joined Sher Mohammad Akhundzada's militia.[563] 'When the Taliban was ousted from Helmand province, the top commanders went to Pakistan but the rank and file were left in Helmand, they could not escape to Pakistan', explained a parliamentarian from Helmand. 'For their safety they joined with Malem Mir Wali and Sher Mohammad Akhundzada'.[564] Most reintegration of Taliban commanders and fighters since 2001 thus probably happened in this period.

But there were also many who, already in those early years, lost out and were preyed upon by those in power. Among the main losers in the post-2001 political order were the Ishaqzai in Sangin, the Kharotei in Nad-e Ali, and the Kakars in Garmsir. Thus, whereas former 93rd Division members looked back at that time as a period of stability, most other interviewees thought differently. They recalled 93rd Division commanders fighting each other and establishing fiefs ('every commander was king of his district'[565]) and preying – by looting, kidnapping and illegal taxation – on communities not represented in the local government.[566]'The division was not a real

[562] 342; 341.
[563] 549.
[564] 417; confirmed by others. 300; 328.
[565] 305.
[566] 318; 300; 317; 318; 324; 331.

division, it was a bunch of militias', said one villager. 'They were the main reason for crimes'.[567]

He, like other victims, joined the Taliban, who were reorganising in 2003 and 2004 to launch an insurgency and were looking for recruits. 'We saw a lot of cruelties from Sher Mohammad Akhundzada, Malem Mir Wali, Dad Mohammad Khan, and Daoud', a former Taliban commander from Qala-e Gaz village in the Upper Gereshk Valley said in an interview. 'They kept asking for money. I was just a farmer. I had not been with the mujahedeen or the Taliban before. I had to join the Taliban to defend myself'.[568]

Much of the competition between the Helmandi powerbrokers and their predation on those not represented in the local administration revolved around the lucrative opium and heroin trade, in which everyone was involved, including division commanders. The division's headquarters in Gereshk was ideally located for it. 'Gereshk is the money centre of Helmand and its economy revolves around trade, especially drugs', said a former British officer. 'When you go from Iran to Pakistan you need to go through Gereshk, and a lot of money is made on the checkpoints'.[569]

The Ishaqzai villages in the Upper Gereshk Valley and the Lower Sangin Valley were known to harbour major drug smugglers. The Mistereekhel clan in the Upper Gereshk Valley was protected by having commanders in the 93rd Division. However, the Chowkazai clan in the Lower Sangin Valley suffered at the hands of both the 93rd Division Barakzai commanders and the brother of Alikozai power broker Dad Mohammad, Sangin district governor Daoud.[570] In response, they joined the Taliban. An Ishaqzai elder explained:

> I am not saying that all Ishaqzai are with the Taliban. Some are with the government. But it is true that most are with the Taliban and that some high-ranking commanders come from our tribe. That is the situation now. Up to 2005 there was no Taliban in our area. The Ishaqzai elders invited them in,

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[567] 305.
[568] 324.
[569] 304.
[570] Martin, *An Intimate War,* 126.

> because the Alikozai and Barakzai people were in the government and they misused their power.[571]

The disbandment of the four powerbrokers' militias, which were vital for the protection of their opium interests against their competitors, resulted in major deterioration of this already precarious security situation, right around the time of the arrival of the British troops in 2006. The removal of the power brokers from their positions and the disbanding of their militias took place unevenly; different powerbrokers were targeted at different times. The first was Malem Mir Wali, in the autumn of 2004. As the commander of an AMF division, he was expected to take part in the first DDR programme. His rivals Sher Mohammad Akhundzada, Abdul Rahman Jan, and Dad Mohammad stayed in power, however, and remained armed.

For Malem Mir Wali and his men the incentive to remain armed was strong. The opportunities to remain armed were, however, dependent on connections to international forces, Kabul factions and the re-organising Taliban movement. Therefore the first DDR programme affected 93rd Division commanders and fighters in different ways. At the top of the division the most notable difference was between Malem Mir Wali and his deputy Haji Kaduz. Although Malem Mir Wali participated in DDR, the militia of his deputy Haji Kaduz did not.[572]

Soon after the establishment of the 93rd Division tensions had arisen between Malem Mir Wali and Haji Kaduz (who were from different Barakzai clans and had supported different jihadi parties) over a land issue. Malem Mir Wali claims that Haji Kaduz used his absence during a trip to Kabul to win the trust of SOF. As mentioned earlier, a group of sixty members of the 93rd Division under command of Kaduz' brother Idris began securing their base Camp Price in 2003 and also started assisting SOF in combat operations. They also provided local intelligence on rivals, including on Malem Mir Wali, who lost U.S. support, which had been his main source of power in Helmand. Because Kaduz's brothers and their fighters had been put on the SOF payroll, it appears they were taken off the AMF list before the DDR process in Helmand got under way.[573]

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[571] 324.
[572] 342; 341.
[573] 342; 341.

Malem Mir Wali, on the other hand, no longer had SOF protection. At the same time President Karzai was backing his long-standing rival, Sher Mohammad Akhundzada. Malem Mir Wali had no choice but to disband the 93rd Division and leave Helmand, afraid for what Akhundzada—governor at the time—and the Taliban might do to him. His vulnerability was on public display when, during the DDR ceremony, he complained to a DDR official that he could no longer defend himself. In response, the official took a Swiss pocketknife from his pocket and gave it to him.[574]

Malem Mir Wali's vulnerability was thus lost on DDR's managers. They had, however, since the first rounds of DDR in Afghanistan, recognised that mid-level commanders needed a different reintegration package than the rank-and-file. Malem Mir Wali was sent on an ANBP sponsored trip to Japan and probably received enough money to tide him over. On his return, he received financial support from the deputy chairman of the National Security Council to run for parliament (though that probably happened as a result of personal connections rather than DDR procedures, as this was not part of the standard ANBP package for commanders). In 2005 he won one of the eight Helmand seats in the lower house of parliament. He did so despite his continued links to militias in Helmand, which was against the electoral law. From Kabul he tried to regain his power in Helmand, explored in the last part of this section.[575]

With Haji Kaduz and his men under U.S. patronage, and Malem Mir Wali in Kabul, what happened to the division's rank-and-file? One group of 93rd Division members found new paymasters in international companies working on reconstruction. Only 121 of the 677 soldiers who existed on paper in the 93rd Division turned up for DDR. A former official compared the plan for DDR in Kabul with the reality in Helmand. 'We were trying to squeeze a bunch of farmers, who were organized along tribal lines, into a formalised process. We had sheets of paper with names, but half of them could turn up for the day for all we knew. It was a well thought out plan in Kabul, but the mechanisms at the local level did not exist'.[576]

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[574] 411.
[575] 342.
[576] 519.

Many of the supposed soldiers who appeared told him that it did not matter that they were handing in their weapons: They had just signed a contract to provide security on the reconstruction of the ring road between Kandahar and Herat, therefore would be rearmed as security guards. 'USPI, a Louis Berger subcontractor, was at that time working on the ring road between Kandahar and Herat [that runs through Helmand] [and] had a massive camp in Gereshk. The people we disarmed said, "We will start tomorrow with USPI"'.[577]

Another group of former 93rd Division members—according to some sources as many as 40 per cent—joined the Taliban and therefore also remained armed.[578] That the other strongmen in Helmand, Sher Mohammad Akhundzada, Dad Mohammad and Abdul Rahman Jan, were still armed was especially problematic for division commanders from marginalised tribes, such as the Ishaqzai, who had few patrons in the local and national government and thus few alternatives. One Ishaqzai elder said: 'The Ishaqzai have been refused assistance at all times, no one has cared about us. The government doesn't accept us, nor do the foreigners. What should I tell you? The Ishaqzai have been kicked and our men have been killed'.[579]

As long as Malem Mir Wali's 93rd Division had existed certain Ishaqzai families in the Upper Gereshk Valley, who were prominent drugs smugglers, had been protected against the predation of the likes of Dad Mohammad and Sher Mohammad Akhunzada. The Mistereekhel clan was linked to Malem Mir Wali through ties from the jihad, when they were his subcommanders in Hezb-e Islami and fighting against the Chowkazai clan. When the 93rd was disarmed, their protection fell away. They became easy targets for Dad Mohammad and Sher Mohammad Akhundzada, who disbanded their militias only later. (Dad Mohammad did so because he wanted to participate in the parliamentary elections in 2005; Sher Mohammad Akhundzada when he was removed as governor in December of the same year.) Malem Mir Wali's Ishaqzai commanders Qari Hazrat and Lala Jan, for example, who operated in Qala-e Gaz northeast of Gereshk, joined the insurgency to protect their interests. This was made easier by the fact that in Quetta high-level Taliban commanders from the

577 519. See also Derksen, "The Politics".
578 303; 305.
579 333.

Ishaqzai were reorganising and contact was made along these tribal lines.[580]

In the Ishaqzai's lower ranks, other considerations than the protection of opium interests played a role. When they lost their income from their employment in the 93rd, rank and file soldiers had to return to their villages, in many cases under Taliban control. To survive they had to join the insurgency. 'What should they have done?' a resident of Qala-e Gaz asked. 'They did it for their own security'.[581] The Taliban also offered new ways of making money. 'The Ishaqzai have a big problem and that is that the canals in their areas are all blocked and their agricultural land is infertile', a thirty-year-old resident of Qala-e-Gaz explained. '[Ishaqzai members of 93rd Division militias] joined the Taliban because they became jobless. The division had kept them busy'.[582]

All told, many former 93rd Division commanders and fighters joined the Taliban. The two main Taliban commanders operating in Nahr-e Saraj in 2010 had both been in the 93rd (one came from Qala-e Gaz). This was true not only in the Ishaqzai-dominated villages north of Gereshk but also in other remote areas in Helmand.[583] Instead of trying to prevent his former fighters from joining the Taliban Malem Mir Wali 'allowed this to happen and took advantage of it', possibly to show that there could be no security in Helmand without him at the helm.[584] A local source close to the Taliban said: 'A lot of people who were first with Malem Mir Wali in Hezb-e Islami and then in the 93rd Division ended up in the Taliban. They still have a connection with him'.[585]

Similar patterns were reported when Sher Mohammad Akhundzada (governor from 2001 until 2005) and Abdul Rahman Jan were removed from their positions. Once they were no longer part of the provincial government, and their militias were disbanded, they reportedly started working against it.[586] A former 93rd Division

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[580] 315; 300.
[581] 333.
[582] 332.
[583] 303; 305; 320; 322; 342.
[584] Martin, *An Intimate War,* 151.
[585] 300, also confirmed by 341.
[586] 'When I was no longer governor the government stopped paying for the people who supported me', Akhundzada himself said in an interview with the *Daily*

commander explained: 'The insecurity in Helmand is the result of four people, Mir Wali, Abdul Rahman Jan, Dad Mohammad, and Sher Mohammad Akhundzada. All four had their own Taliban. They wanted a force on the government side and on the Taliban side'.[587]

In sum, the local political context in Helmand after 2001, with the powerbrokers vying, through low-level violence, for government posts, a stake in the local opium market and resources from SOF, meant that the incentive to remain armed was strong. When their militias were threatened with disarmament, their men tried to find new paymasters, including, in many cases, the Taliban. The strongmen allowed their fighters to join the Taliban to show that there could be no security without them in charge.

Therefore, DDR programmes and the ad hoc firing of strongmen and the demobilisation of their militias, led a new wave of recruits to join the growing Taliban movement; a movement that had a few years earlier been recruiting groups who had been preyed upon by the same strongmen. This diffuse picture of the origins of the insurgency in Helmand showed how loyalties were fluid. Often pragmatic not ideological reasons motivated recruitment. This was in sharp contrast to the perspective of SOF, who divided the local political landscape into pro-government armed groups versus ideologically-motivated Taliban and thus had little knowledge of local politics or their role in shaping it.

5.3.2. The PTS and the APRP

The label Taliban masked numerous different groups and motives, as the above

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Telegraph in 2009 (Damien McElroy, "Afghan Governor Turned 3,000 Men Over to the Taliban," *Daily Telegraph,* November 20, 2009). 'I sent 3,000 of them off to the Taliban because I could not afford to support them but the Taliban was making payments. Lots of people, including my family members, went back to the Taliban because they had lost respect for the government'. Former provincial police commander Abdul Rahman Jan's men attacked the British troops in Nad-e Ali after an eradication campaign had targeted poppy fields belonging to him and his followers. He also reportedly invited Taliban into the area. Dad Mohammad disarmed voluntarily in 2005 through the DIAG programme in order to run in the parliamentary elections. Martin, *An Intimate War,* 174.

[587] 341.

showed. For local Taliban exclusion was, however, an important common denominator. The movement attracted many local actors who were unable to secure protection, jobs or prestige through government-related patronage networks. As local strongmen's militias were disbanded under the DDR and DIAG programmes and local competition over contracts with international troops, government positions and the opium business intensified, more and more people fell by the wayside and joined up.

Much of the violence thus had little to do with the Taliban movement directly, let alone its ideology. Insurgent leaders in Pakistan, however, recognised the opportunity to exploit local conflicts and grievances against the new government and recruited from the local population. Communities that provided fighters also acted as a support network, giving them food, accommodation, and intelligence. The Taliban functioned as a 'catalyser for many grievances that existed among the population'.[588]

The PTS and APRP programmes strove to reintegrate Taliban commanders and fighters and thus create a more inclusive society. However, as the previous chapters have shown, neither programme could singlehandedly roll back the dynamic of political exclusion created by the absence of Taliban leaders at the Bonn Conference. Without a political agreement leading to the establishment of a more inclusive government at the top, supported by the U.S. government, it was going to be difficult to create a more inclusive political order in Helmand. Instead, the continuing military operations against the Taliban provided local powerbrokers with the means to exclude their rivals, as the previous section showed. The PTS and APRP offered insurgents little more than surrender or co-optation, which in many cases meant participants would return to the situation that had led them to join the Taliban in the first place.

Though DDR, DIAG and other measures had removed strongmen from their official positions in Helmand, they continued to exert influence informally. From Kabul they found new ways to undermine or co-opt their successors in the local administration, to resist the inclusion of their local rivals in government and even to support the insurgency – to show that there could be no security without them. As in Kunduz,

[588] Theo Farrell and Antonio Giustozzi, "The Taliban at War: Inside the Helmand Insurgency, 2004–2012," *International Affairs* 89: 4 (July 2013): 845–871.

Baghlan and Uruzgan, the DDR and DIAG programmes in Helmand had not fundamentally changed the local political order by effectively removing strongmen from the scene. If anything, they had inadvertently helped move local politics beyond the grasp of state institutions.

Former governor (2001-2005) and Karzai ally Sher Mohammad Akhundzada influenced the PTS and the APRP from Kabul by having friends appointed in the local management of both programmes. In the case of the APRP this was presumably facilitated by his own appointment in 2010 as member of the High Peace Council. A well-informed local observer of the PTS and APRP said: 'The management of these programmes was made based on friendship and connection. Peace is being inherited in Helmand, it goes around with Sher Mohammad Akhundzada. But he can't even go to his own district, so how can they make peace with the Taliban?'[589]

The fact that the programmes were part of Sher Mohammad Akhundzada's patronage network was mentioned as one of the main reasons why they did not attract many real Taliban.[590] 'Sher Mohammad Akhundzada disturbed people, people joined the Taliban because of him', said one source close to the programmes. 'If they see this kind of person in the peace programme, they are not going to come'.[591]

Of the six mid-level Taliban commanders interviewed in Helmand for this thesis, only one was interested in participating in the APRP. Five mentioned the lack of legitimacy of the government, next to the continued presence of foreign forces, as the main disincentive for joining the APRP. One of them said:

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589 400. Also asserted by 321.

590 The former head of the PTS in Helmand claimed to have registered 327 participants. However, he added that, following instructions from Kabul, they were 'not very strict on the details'. 'As long as the ones who wanted to join presented themselves as Taliban we would register them (321) Another former PTS official said: 'We couldn't bring in any Taliban'. (400) In September 2015 the Joint Secretariat in Kabul counted 216 APRP participants in Helmand. Joint Secretariat,"Reintegrees and TA Progress Sheet 18-08-2015," *Islamic Republic of Afghanistan*, unpublished. However, apart from some of the programmes' officials most interviewees said the programmes had attracted few genuine Taliban. 400; 341; 312; 313; 315; 316; 324.

591 340.

> What has changed in the government that we should join the APRP? When I joined Taliban, government officials disturbed people. What has changed? Nothing has changed. We are fighting for change.[592]

In this situation, with their rivals still in the local and national government and the Taliban leadership not consenting to the demobilisation of their troops, those Taliban commanders and fighters who were interested in the PTS and the APRP faced considerable physical risks. The only protection the APRP could offer participants was through them joining the ALP, though even this was not on offer for everyone. 'I myself would like to join with the Afghan government in this process, but who guarantees our life?', said one Taliban commander. 'Many Taliban have joined the Afghan government, but some of them were killed by Taliban again. It means that Afghan government can not ensure our security'.[593]

A former Taliban commander, who chose to not go through the APRP when he lay down his weapons because he was afraid that the public ceremony would draw attention to him, said that the lack of security guarantees might have held back many insurgents. 'There might be a lot of Taliban who think about leaving, but what should they do? The government is not powerful enough to protect them. If they stay with Taliban they are in mountains and fighting. But the government is not able to take their security. They want to join with a powerful government'.[594] Other interviewees commented along the same lines.[595] One former PTS official said: 'The fighting Taliban do not come to make peace. The issue is that neither side wants peace. Most importantly, Pakistan and the U.S. are not cooperating'.[596]

Gulab Mangal, Helmand governor from May 2008 until September 2012, argued that no insurgents joined the PTS or the APRP while he was in office, because they did not trust the government. He preferred an informal process that, according to him, yielded 'thousands' of genuine Taliban, who were 'tired of fighting' (thousands seems an exaggeration, but it would be safe to assume there were more than those in

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[592] 305.
[593] 312.
[594] 324.
[595] 300; 332; 333.
[596] 400.

the APRP).

> The people who came [through the APRP] and were exposed to the media were part of a symbolic process. The symbolic Taliban found a few weapons, then they contacted the peace council and then the media were invited to show off the programme. It was more or less like a business in Afghanistan. There were people who joined once in one province and then the same people went to another province to join again, to get more benefits.[597]

The programmes' managers were reportedly more interested in lining their own pockets than in bringing in genuine Taliban. Local managers complained about corruption in Kabul ('For the HPC in Kabul, peace is a business, a way to make money', said an APRP official. 'They're making fun of us'[598]). Others claimed that local managers were also involved in fraud.[599] In the absence of a broader shift in the national and local political order and in an economy kept afloat by foreign donors, the internationally funded PTS and APRP seemed to have become not much more than yet another way of making money for the establishment.

5.3.3. Local deals and informal Taliban reintegration

There were also efforts in Helmand to reintegrate Taliban informally, with foreign involvement, in the districts of Musa Qala and Sangin, both in northern Helmand. When the British deployed to Helmand in 2006 they moved into small outposts in district centres in the north of the province. Once there, they were drawn into what one general described as the most intense fighting the British Army had seen since the Korean War in the 1950s.[600]

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[597] Derksen, "The Politics," 32; 339. The ALP served as one channel to informally reintegrate Taliban commanders, and NDS militias were another. According to Mangal, most informally reintegrated Taliban joined the ALP, making the militia programme the main track for informal reintegration. Around 80 per cent of those Taliban joined the ALP, he asserted, and only 20 per cent of APRP participants joined the militia programme; 037. Mike Martin writes that 'The [ALP] programme recycled some of the security actors' armed interests away from the 'Taliban' and temporarily towards the 'government'' (Martin, *An Intimate War,* 220).

[598] 339.

[599] 400; 339; 321.

[600] As the then ISAF commander General Sir David Richards described it to the BBC; Alastair Leithead, "Peace Mission that Became Battle," *BBC News*, June 8, 2008. See

In the fall of 2006, exhausted British forces backed a deal brokered by then governor Mohammad Daud and elders from Musa Qala. The British moved out of the district in return for the Taliban pledging not to attack the district centre. A few months later, however, the deal collapsed after a bombing raid of the U.S. forces just outside the five-kilometre exclusion zone that had been agreed upon, and the Taliban recaptured the town. Only in December 2007 would coalition forces recapture Musa Qala. The 'rapid and relatively bloodless success' of that operation was partly due to 'a coordinated operation to talk Taliban commanders out of the fight', according to then EU Special Representative deputy Michael Semple, who was involved in motivating commanders to reconcile.[601]

Semple and MoI and NDS officials in Kabul also planned to set up a demobilisation and reintegration camp for former Taliban fighters. Member of Parliament Jabbar Qahraman, working with Semple on the idea, had already brought in former 93rd Division Taliban commanders from Qala-e Gaz and Shurakhey in Nahr-e Saraj who could enrol in the programme and then work as an auxiliary force of the local police under directions of the district police chief, who was also interested in the plan. However, the provincial governor of the time, Assadullah Wafa, opposed it and the government expelled Semple and a colleague from the UN, who had accompanied him on a visit to Helmand. Semple maintains his claim that the government had approved the initiative.[602]

The events surrounding the 2006 Musa Qala deal and all that followed illustrate the lack of coordination and different agendas of the Afghan government and international community, and of the U.S. and the U.K., reportedly 'at loggerheads' over the deal. On 1 February 2007, the day that Taliban forces recaptured Musa Qala the British ISAF commander Sir David Richards handed over command to American

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also Emile Simpson, *War from the Ground Up: Twenty-First Century Combat as Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 45.

601 Suhrke et al., "Conciliatory Approaches", 41.

602 Suhrke et al.,"Conciliatory Approaches, 32. This is confirmed by Sherard Cowper-Coles in his memoir, *Cables from Kabul*, (New York: Harper Press, 2012), 129-130. Stephen Grey, *Operation Snakebite: The Explosive True Story of an Afghan Desert Siege* (London: Penguin Books, 2010), 287, 291-294; Martin, *Intimate War*, 169, 170. 417; 522.

General Dan McNeill, who 'opposed the kind of local agreements that Richards favoured'. Whatever Karzai's reasons were for opposing the Musa Qala deal, he was clearly not on board, and without his approval no local peace initiative stood a chance.[603]

After Musa Qala, the British were less active in reaching out to insurgents, and emphasized that any initiatives had to be 'Afghan-led'.[604] They did, however, gradually come to better understand local dynamics and, although their emphasis remained on trying to beat the insurgency militarily, made modest efforts to reach out to low-level fighters. A British officer who served in 2010 in central Helmand said:

> From 2006 to 2008 the British didn't know about the issues, we didn't understand that by what we were doing we were favouring some tribal interests. Now we are much more attuned to local politics. We understand that for the people in Helmand there is no political distinction between the Taliban and the government. Everybody is on both sides and no sides. Most are somewhere in the middle.[605]

He explained too how the British supported low-level reconciliation.

> We looked at the population, broke them down in groups and gave each group a shade according to how close they are to the narrative of the government of Afghanistan. The hard-core commanders you can only get if they are incorporated in a wider political dialogue higher up. We concentrated on the lower level people. Local Afghans usually would take the lead in this type of reconciliation. We just set the conditions. For example, we made sure that the guy in question could be sure of his security. Or we offered reconstruction projects.[606]

Most encounters with insurgents, however, remained on the battlefield, or, at best, lines were drawn around outposts to mark respective areas. 'We heard them talking on the radio and we shouted to them on loud speakers', said an officer who was based in Nad-e Ali in 2009 about his communication with the Taliban. 'We also left night

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[603] Suhrke et al., "Conciliatory Approaches, 40.
[604] Suhrke et al., "Conciliatory Approaches, 33.
[605] 504.
[606] 504.

letters in their compound, which said: don't come here or I will kill you. I drew my battle lines, and I allowed them to operate beyond them'.[607]

Any agreement between opposing forces remained fraught with difficulties, as multiple international and local actors with different agendas operated in any area where such an agreement might take place. In 2008, for example, British troops went into Nad-e Ali after letting the tribal elders know that they were coming, so there would not be any fighting. 'We sat down with elders. They said: please give us our poppy back. We said that we were not interested in taking your poppy. Then the PEF [an American-led poppy eradication force] came in and overnight the area became one of active insurgency'.[608]

The American-led military and civilian surge under the newly-elected Obama administration brought 10,000 Marines to Helmand in early 2009. Although the Obama administration was more interested in reconciliation with high-level Taliban than its predecessor, it planned to pressure the Taliban militarily first, as explored in chapter 3. American efforts in Helmand overwhelmingly went to the battlefield. The Taliban suffered greatly from the kill-or-capture campaign, which killed many mid-level commanders – fracturing the movement. There appears to have been no comprehensive drive to reconcile local Taliban.

In the Alikozai-dominated area of Sarwan Qala in Sangin, however, in late 2010 Alikozai elders brokered a deal with the then provincial governor under the auspices first of the British and then the U.S. troops (as Theo Farrell writes, the formal agreement was signed on 1 January 2011, witnessed by the head of the British PRT and the U.S. Commander of Regional Command Southwest).[609] According to an ISAF press release, 'insurgent fighting would cease against coalition forces and foreign fighters would be expelled from the area' in exchange for reconstruction and development projects and the participation of Afghan forces in searches of compounds and patrols. Seven Taliban commanders signed the document outlining

[607] 520.
[608] 549.
[609] For a detailed examination of the Sangin peace deal see Theo Farrell, *Unwinnable: Britain's War in Afghanistan, 2001-2014* (London: The Bodley Head, forthcoming 2017), chapter 10.

the deal that elders presented to the U.S. troops.[610] One of the Alikozai Taliban commanders said:

> We fought the government and the foreigners because of the elders, so that the Americans would not come inside their village and search their houses. But one day the elders came to us and said that while they agreed that we were fighting against the foreigners it had led to the deaths of innocent people and to the destruction of houses. They requested us to stop fighting. I replied that if we stopped fighting the Taliban itself would punish us. I proposed to negotiate a ceasefire, which would allow us to keep our weapons. The elders accepted that.[611]

The Alikozai communities in the Upper Sangin Valley did not constitute the core of the insurgency in Sangin, however. There are conflicting reports on how they had ended up supporting the Taliban, but most agree the relationship was not close.[612] Plus, in the spring of 2010, those communities also began to fear the cruelties of Taliban commanders who were outsiders, and reached out to the British PRT and the district governor Mohammad Sharif. It seems, therefore, that the chances of local authorities and foreign troops reaching a deal with these Alikozai communities were more feasible than their reaching a similar deal with villages with traditionally closer ties to the movement, like those in the Ishaqzai communities.[613]

But even among the Alikozai the deal soon faltered. The promised stabilisation projects of the British PRT failed to come through. U.S. Marines started patrolling deep in Alikozai heartlands 'to test the deal'.[614] The Taliban leadership reacted by intimidating Alikozai elders and sending in foreign fighters. In May 2013 Sarwan Qala was the scene of a major Taliban operation and that year the Pentagon listed Sangin as one of Afghanistan's most violent districts. After the surge of violence it appeared the Afghan army commander brokered a cease-fire and turf-sharing deal that

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610 ISAF Joint Command – Afghanistan, "Afghan, Coalition Leaders Broker Peace Deal in Sangin," *International Security Assistance Force*, 2011. 058; 059; 041; 323.
611 328.
612 One western source involved in the deal even said: 'The Alikozai tribe don't consider themselves as Taliban'. 525.
613 326; 327; 525.
614 Julius Cavendish, "Snatching Defeat From the Jaws of Victory: How ISAF Infighting Helped Doom Sangin to its Ongoing Violence," *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, July 23, 2014.

provided some temporary respite. In the spring and summer of 2014 Sangin was, however, again a major battleground.[615]

The failure to negotiate a sustainable peace deal with the Alikozai was due partly to what Julius Cavendish sees as its main cause: Western powers' 'infighting and internal agendas' which undermined the coalition's broader goals.[616] More important, however, was the overall prioritisation of the military campaign over a political approach that tended to doom such initiatives. It meant that the wrong type of foreigner and unit were deployed.

Under the command of General Mills, the U.S. Commander of Regional Command Southwest, a meeting was bombed in November 2010 that, according to Julius Cavendish, might have expanded a peace deal from a purely Alikozai affair to one with wider support. The meeting included tribal elders from the Barakzai, Noorzai and Ishaqzai and had been called by the main Taliban commander in the district. After the attack, only the Alikozai continued their negotiations with the local government while the others left.[617] In 2011 a local Barakzai Taliban commander from the Sarwan Qala area said:

> The elders came to me, but I rejected them. I told them that until the time these foreign troops are in Afghanistan and until the time that Mullah Omar tells me to stop fighting I will continue my fight. We have talked with Mullah X [the Alikozai commander quoted earlier] to bring him back. If he doesn't return to us we will attack Sarwan Qala.[618]

In sum, efforts were made to reintegrate Taliban informally, with foreign involvement, in the districts of Musa Qala in 2006 and Sangin in 2010, both in northern Helmand. But the military campaign against the Taliban, which included air strikes and aggressive patrolling by foreign troops, always took priority over a political approach aimed at either getting the Taliban leadership on board or gradually

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615 "Report on Progress Towards Security and Stability in Afghanistan," Report to Congress, *Department of Defense*, November 2013. Azam Ahmed and Taimoor Shah, "Local Turf-Sharing Accord With the Taliban Raises Alarm in Afghanistan," *New York Times*, December 18, 2013.
616 Cavendish, "Snatching Defeat".
617 Cavendish, "Snatching Defeat".
618 311.

expanding local ceasefires and, ultimately, at creating a more inclusive government nationally and locally. This tended to scupper any local initiatives, though they also suffered from a lack of coordination and infighting between Western troop contingents.

5.3.4. Reversing DDR and DIAG — the case of Malem Mir Wali part 2

Much as Sher Mohammad Akhundzada continued to exert informal influence in Helmand after losing his position in the local administration, so did the Barakzai powerbrokers in Nahr-e Saraj district in central Helmand. Former 93rd Division commander Malem Mir Wali eventually recovered his influence on the local security sector in Nahr-e Saraj from Kabul, where he became a member of parliament first in 2005. He was re-elected in 2010. This happened despite his unpopularity among the local population – many complain that 'he only works for himself', either meaning that he did not distribute his resources or that he did not have resources to distribute. Numerous sources claim his election was due to fraud. But, as many emphasise, the seat in parliament, which offers lawmakers the possibility to influence government appointments and also allows them to keep a finger in their provinces' pie, permitted him to manipulate government affairs in Helmand.[619] After his second election he scored two important victories.

The first was the ALP programme that was rolled out in January 2011 in Helmand. Malem Mir Wali was able to quickly move many of his allies – disgruntled former 93rd Division commanders and fighters – into the militia programme, thus boosting his popularity. Notwithstanding the provisions in the electoral law forbidding members of parliament from having ties to armed groups, Malem Mir Wali himself claimed that some 250 former 93rd commanders and fighters linked to him joined the 500-strong ALP. This apparently included some of those who had previously joined the Taliban.[620]

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[619] 417; 318; 341; 317; 325; 504.

[620] 342; Derksen, "The Politics," 34. The formation of the ALP in Helmand basically rehatted the old militias. Although officials claimed that the ALP programme improved security by keeping Taliban out, often it simply involved 'paying many Talibs not to fight because they were members of the ALP'. (Martin, *An Intimate War*), 252.

Like elsewhere the ALP thus functioned as an informal reintegration programme; getting disenchanted former mujahedeen, in this case former 93rd Division commanders and fighters, some of who had joined the Taliban after DDR, back on the government side. Asked if he still thought DDR was a mistake, Malem Mir Wali said:

> If it was not a mistake why did they make the ALP? What is the difference with the old militias? The old militias defended the villages. I would like to add that the old militias that got DDR-ed were much better organised and they knew how to be nice with the villagers. They were much better than the current militias. The old militias were not addicted to drugs. The ALP has no knowledge, they are into narcotics. The old militia were 100 per cent better.[621]

Malem Mir Wali's biggest triumph, however, was the appointment in 2013 of his son Hekmatullah as Nahr-e Saraj district police chief in command of 510 ANP and the ALP.

In contrast to Malem Mir Wali, Hekmatullah was a professionally trained police commander. Some locals said that he kept people safe, and he seemed to enjoy more popularity than his father, whose reputation was tainted by the crimes of the 93rd Division in the early years after the fall of the Taliban regime.[622] 'The highway security is much better [since Hekmatullah is police chief], there are check posts in most places', said one villager. 'Before he came it was very insecure'.[623]

Others complained that Hekmatullah as district police chief brought no change. Some locals claimed that a network of a few strongmen in Nahr-e-Saraj could do what they wanted and that people who challenged them in court were intimidated. They said they were less afraid for the Taliban after the foreign forces left than for local officials, who according to them were corrupt and engaged in drug trafficking.[624]

Haji Kaduz, Malem Mir Wali's former deputy in the 93rd Division, also remained influential. After DDR, he became district police chief for a year before being charged

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621 Derksen, "The Politics," 34.
622 417; 317; 318; 325; 332; 333; 504.
623 325.
624 332; 333.

with security on the highway from the provincial capital to Gereshk until 2008. When the government stopped paying him, Malgir and Babaji south of Gereshk fell to the Taliban; he claimed because he had left the area. In 2013 he commanded fighters in his area of Chargandaz in Malgir.[625]

The main basis of Haji Kaduz' family's influence in Gereshk after the DDR programme, however, was its work with foreign troops, first SOF and, after 2006, ISAF forces. The construction company of Kaduz's brother Mullah Daoud was involved in the construction of Camp Bastion. After another brother of Kaduz, Idris, who was in charge of base security for Camp Price, was assassinated Mullah Daoud reportedly took over until the contract ended in 2011. They employed about 110 fighters, many of whom were former members of the 93rd. As mentioned earlier, they were not disarmed under the DDR programme, presumably because they had been taken off the MoD payroll beforehand. They also seem not to have participated in DIAG, at least not to the extent that their militia was effectively disbanded. Although they were prominent militia commanders in Nahr-e-Saraj at the time, neither Kaduz nor Mullah Daoud appeared on an internal DIAG chart of commanders from 2007 that included a section on illegal armed groups in Nahr-e Saraj.[626]

The decade that passed between the first DDR programme and the end of the Karzai administration thus had not seen a diminishing of the Barakzai strongmen's influence in Nahr-e-Saraj.[627] If anything, they and their followers were more armed than after disbandment in 2004 as a result of the introduction of militia programmes such as the ALP, unofficial attempts by U.S. troops and the NDS to arm militias, and the growth

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[625] 341.

[626] 341; Afghanistan New Beginnings Programme, "Chart of Commanders," dated 27 January 2005.

[627] Though they had become more fragmented compared to right after the fall of the Taliban regime, which in many ways was even worse for security. During provincial council elections in 2009 the Barakzai fielded 27 candidates in Helmand. In the year before Hekmatullah's appointment as district police chief of Nahr-e Saraj, the Barakzai stronghold, the position had changed hands seven times.
Malem Mir Wali and Haji Kaduz remained at odds, in spite of several reconciliation attempts. In the spring of 2013 Haji Kaduz was chosen as the head of a local (informal) council in Gereshk; a few days later Malem Mir Wali announced himself the head of a rival council. His son, the district police chief, Hekmatullah was assassinated in 2015.

of the insurgency.

Informal rearmament on the government side (next to the appointment of Barakzai powerbrokers in the ANP), which in some cases meant re-hatting Taliban as pro-government militias, reflected the necessity of accommodating the Barakzai strongmen and their followers in the local political order. By not offering them integration into the new army immediately after the disbandment of the 93rd Division in 2004 under the first DDR programme, an opportunity was missed to try and impose more institutional control. Instead, the Barakzai strongmen's influence in Helmand was as informal in 2014 as it had been a decade earlier, and government institutions still had as little control over them.

5.4. DDR deepens political exclusion in the southwest

DDR programmes in Uruzgan and Helmand thus reflected the political context in which they were initiated and deepened the pattern of political marginalisation in place since 2001 – like in the northeast. The exclusion of Taliban leaders from the post-2001 political order in both provinces meant that the international troops supported exclusionary and predatory local administrations made up of anti-Taliban strongmen and their militias and that foreign resources poured in to hunt al-Qaeda and the Taliban. Moreover, in the first years after the fall of the Taliban regime there was no internationally-supported mechanism for the surrender of local Taliban commanders and their reintegration into civilian society. Kabul factions, especially the group around President Karzai, used the international anti-Taliban agenda to further their own interests by supporting allies in local administrations.

While international troops viewed the local political landscape in Uruzgan and Helmand through the lens of an internationally-supported Afghan government versus the Taliban, split along an ideological dividing line, local actors saw it differently. They rarely, if ever, competed for ideological reasons. Instead they battled each other for government positions, international resources and a stake in the local opium business.

In these circumstances disarmament was a terrible threat. It removed a powerbroker's

main asset in his competition with others and it was an indicator of the loss of international and factional support. Disarmament was not a neutral exercise. Access to military force had always been essential to the survival of any group at any time. The past decades of war only reinforced its importance. Those involved in the competition for resources in Uruzgan and Helmand were mainly former jihadi commanders, whose careers had been made on the battlefield. Unsurprisingly DDR was viewed negatively.

The case studies above show how, in Uruzgan and Helmand, DDR and DIAG impacted the targeted groups according to three scenarios. The first was that powerbrokers were able to switch from a government position, in which they were targeted, to international patronage. It seems that especially those commanders who were not weak but also not the most visible were able to do this: kandak commander Matiullah in the case of the AMF brigade in Uruzgan and 93rd Division deputy Haji Kaduz in Helmand. Under the patronage of SOF they could keep access to armed force and even expand it, especially in the case of Matiullah in Uruzgan. In that province the Barakzai and Achekzai commanders who at first lost out because of DDR, were later able to benefit from Dutch and Australian patronage.

The second scenario concerned the strongmen at the top: Jan Mohammad in Uruzgan and Malem Mir Wali in Helmand (and also Sher Mohammad Akhundzada and Dad Mohammad). Either through DDR, DIAG or other measures they were removed from the local administrations and brought to Kabul, where they obtained a position in the national government. However, instead of making sure that ties to their home provinces were effectively cut, including by insisting on them breaking their links to local armed groups, the Karzai government allowed them to maintain an informal network in their provinces, including armed groups – which was, in the cases of Jan Mohammad and Sher Mohammad Akhundzada, to the advantage of President Karzai's faction, which could retain its influence in the area**.** This meant that instead of the government institutions achieving control over informal networks, in fact those informal networks penetrated government institutions. The strongmen were also one of the driving forces behind the violence that hit the southwest as they departed, which was their way of showing that there could be no security and stability without them.

Thus, in the first two scenarios, international troops and Kabul factions allowed (and even helped) provincial strongmen to remain armed, and to profit from it. In an increasingly volatile security environment, no one was really serious about disarming what were seen as either anti-Taliban or pro-Karzai militias. Many rank-and-file also ended up as security guards for construction companies.

In the third scenario, those without direct connections to the government or international troops joined the Taliban to protect their opium interests, for a new job, or simply because the insurgents had taken over their village and they had no other choice. The fate of many 93rd Division commanders in Helmand is illustrative. Many had some link to the Taliban, either because they had supported the movement before 2001 or because they were tribally linked to leading insurgents. Again, personal connections were all that mattered.

There are thus many similarities between what happened in Uruzgan and Helmand around the issue of DDR. In both cases Karzai-supported governors (respectively Jan Mohammad and Sher Mohammad Akhundzada) pursued similar tactics in ridding themselves of rivals. Weak rivals were labelled as Taliban, which opened the way for predation and informal disarmament. Barakzai rivals were attacked in a more covert way, and both governors profited from the demobilisation under the first DDR programme of Barakzai strongmen, before having to disband their own militias when they were fired from their positions. This uneven disbandment in the midst of intense competition for government positions, international contracts and opium created extra tension and instability in both provinces.

But there were also differences. In Uruzgan, a demographically, geographically and economically smaller province, Jan Mohammad's successor as main provincial powerbroker, Matiullah, enjoyed the support from both U.S. troops and the Karzai government, and was thus able to achieve a near monopoly on violence on the government side, at least in the province's center. Formal and informal disarmament of rivals was an important mechanism for Matiullah in achieving this.

In Helmand, international and factional patronage was more fractured amidst an

already crowded political landscape. The first DDR programme led to more fragmentation, as can be seen in the example of the 93rd Division of the AMF. While it had held together a diverse group of commanders, after DDR they went in different directions and violence between them increased. Sher Mohammad Akhundzada and other powerbrokers temporarily profited from DDR but then left for Kabul.

The end result for the security situation thus differs, though in both cases a strong insurgency caused major instability. In Uruzgan Matiullah became the main informal and formal powerbroker in the security sector. However, there had been no serious attempt to bring him and his men under institutional control. This meant that any security that he created was temporary and evaporated when he was assassinated in early 2015.

Helmand's security landscape stayed crowded, with some strongmen profiting from informal or semi-formal militias, while the provincial police operated among different lines of command. In Nahr-e Saraj the diverse security systems temporarily overlapped in the person of Hekmatullah, the son of Malem Mir Wali. In early 2015 he was however also assassinated.

Throughout the period that this thesis covers there was no real interest in peace by the main parties to the war – the Taliban, the Karzai government, the U.S. and Pakistan – and the political situation thus remained the same. The Taliban increased their activities over the years, and, recognising this growing security problem, Western governments operating in Afghanistan supported reintegration programmes for mid-level Taliban commanders and their fighters, but without engaging in peace talks with Taliban leaders.

If the programmes had been a success, the highest numbers of participants should have been in areas where the insurgency was fiercest, which included southwestern Afghanistan. However, Uruzgan and Helmand both saw low levels of participation, and there were widespread doubts as to the identity of those who did sign up.

In both provinces the legitimacy of the programmes suffered because in many cases they did not offer much more than surrender to a local government whose behaviour

had motivated those fighting with the Taliban to take up weapons in the first place. Even if insurgents were interested in surrendering, possible revenge from the Taliban added to the risks. In the absence of any real interest from Taliban, the PTS and APRP became just another way for the local establishment to make money.

Internationally-supported informal attempts to make deals with Taliban (which usually did not amount to surrender, but to ceasefires) were undermined by infighting among international actors and between international actors and Karzai government. However, the main underlying problem remained the prioritisation of a military campaign against the Taliban over political efforts to create more inclusive national and local governments.

Taliban reintegration attempts thus did not change the local political orders in Uruzgan and Helmand. Instead it strengthened them by, ultimately, reinforcing the establishment instead of those excluded. The battle lines had been drawn and they would not change without the willingness of the main warring parties to reconfigure the political landscape, in Kabul and the provinces.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

Ten years ago Dutch troops deployed to Uruzgan to help with 'post-war reconstruction efforts'. As a foreign desk reporter for the Dutch newspaper *De Volkskrant* I was sent to Afghanistan to report on this deployment. Although by this time it was becoming increasingly clear that the troops would also face a growing insurgency, the Dutch government's emphasis lay on 'winning the hearts and minds' of the Uruzganis and on helping them rebuild their province after 25 years of war. [628]

These were the main topics of conversation during visits to the Dutch embassy in Kabul, a majestic white house surrounded by neatly kept lawns, and to the Dutch PRT in Uruzgan's provincial capital Tirin Kot, a collection of white containers secured by Hesco walls in desert like surroundings. In both places I encountered tall and slightly sunburnt Dutch officers and soldiers in sparkling new desert uniforms, full of optimism about helping to strengthen the Karzai government. They talked about 'sustainability', 'accountability' and 'capacity building'.[629]

The contrast with what was happening outside the walls of the embassy in Kabul and the PRT in Uruzgan could not have been starker. In Kabul, a visit to the pink-painted house of former Uruzgan governor Jan Mohammad, opposite ISAF headquarters, revealed how influential he still was in the province. Despite the fact that the Dutch government had conditioned its troop deployment on his removal and that he was thus no longer acting in official capacity, Uruzgani parliamentarians, senators, and officials working in the provincial administration still frequently visited his house to receive instructions. His power in the province was clearly greater than that of any official.[630]

Moreover, after having been exiled to Kabul he was reportedly involved in actively destabilising the province to show that without him at the helm there would be no security. His deliberate destabilisation of Uruzgan came after four years of having

[628] Personal observations of the author, summer 2006. See also Goodhand and Sedra, "Rethinking International Peacebuilding," 245; Derksen, "Thee met de Taliban".
[629] Personal observations of the author, summer 2006. See also Derksen, "Thee met de Taliban".
[630] Personal observations of the author, summer 2006.

driven many personal rivals of relatively weak tribes in the arms of the insurgency through predatory tactics; tactics inadvertently supported and legitimised by the U.S. troops' fight against the Taliban. In short, Jan Mohammad was bad news for the Dutch agenda of 'post-war reconstruction efforts'. He was an important part of the reason why there was more war than post-war in Uruzgan; more fighting than reconstruction.[631]

There was, however, little the Dutch could do about it. Jan Mohammad enjoyed the full support of President Karzai, whose very government the Dutch were supposed to strengthen by demobilising warlords such as Jan Mohammad. Although SOF had by 2006 given up on Jan Mohammad, a visit to Tirin Kot showed that they still fully supported his nephew, militia commander Matiullah, who was seen as an energetic Taliban fighter. Symbolically, he resided right next to Camp Holland and Firebase Ripley, the SOF's main base. The Dutch tried to ignore him. But gradually Matiullah became Uruzgan's most prominent powerbroker (much to Jan Mohammad's chagrin, who had been Matiullah's main local supporter previously, but had also wanted to stay the province's number one powerbroker), even though he had no official position until after they left.[632]

The Dutch ostensive state building agenda was thus undermined by actions of SOF and by the Karzai government itself, who had different agendas. SOF wanted to fight the Taliban; the Karzai faction wanted to strengthen itself, not the whole government. These forces were stronger than the Dutch, who could do no more than lodge complaint after complaint and try to support alternative powerbrokers in Uruzgan.[633] Moreover, although many individual Dutch officers, soldiers and officials, like their American counterparts, were fully committed to the state building agenda, the Dutch government's real interest also lay elsewhere. First and foremost, it deployed troops to show commitment to its transatlantic relations with the U.S. and to show it was a trustworthy NATO partner. This meant that, in spite of differences of opinion with the

631 See chapter 4.
632 Personal observations author, summer 2006. See also chapter 4.
633 Dam, "The Story of 'M'".

Americans about the general approach in Uruzgan, the Dutch stayed until 2010 and worked within the framework that their stronger partners had defined.[634]

The story of the power relations between international troops, the Afghan government and warlords in Uruzgan around 2006, and what this meant for state building efforts such as DDR, which is told in greater detail in chapter 4, tells us more about the three points of departure for this thesis as outlined in the introduction: first, that the main focus of militarised patronage networks is inclusion in the patrimonial state; second, that the U.S. government, the main international actor in Afghanistan, prioritised the fight against the Taliban over state building, which led to the creation to an exclusionary and predatory political order; and, third, that affiliations are fickle and powerbrokers not included in the post-2001 political order were liable to become spoilers. Events in Uruzgan around 2006 as recounted above and in chapter 4 support all three points. What does the rest of this study say about these assumptions? And what did these points, if true, mean for the four DDR programmes that were initiated in post-2001 Afghanistan?

6.1. International intervention and DDR

The first part of this thesis examined the political context in which the DDR programmes were initiated, and how the timing, design and initiation of these programmes reflected this context. The U.S., the main international actor operating in Afghanistan after 2001, prioritised the military campaign against the Taliban (which led to their exclusion from the Bonn Conference and, subsequently, from the post-2001 political order) over the international state building agenda. DDR was made to

634 Reluctance to blame the U.S. for the failure to address warlordism in Uruzgan becomes clear, for example, from the Dutch government's final assessment on why Matiullah kept armed and operating as militia commander after the Highway Police was disbanded. "*At the national political level there was unfortunately not enough Afghan political will* and courage to put an end to the militia of Matiullah Khan and the way was free for him to continue with his own policy and activities." Italics added by the author. "Eindevaluatie," *Ministeries van Buitenlandse Zaken en Defensie*, 56 ("Final evaluation," *Dutch Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence*), 56. Personal observations of the author, summer 2006; see Dam, "The Story of 'M'".

work for the military campaign, which is clear from the timing of the programmes, their design and the way they were implemented.

The military campaign morphed over time from being an invasion to oust a sitting regime, to hunting members of that regime and their allies (counter terrorism) to trying to fight back a growing insurgency (counter insurgency). Military imperatives thus changed over time. What did not change, however, was their continued domination of the overall U.S. agenda in Afghanistan. The state building agenda was not only pushed aside when it was inconvenient for the military campaign, but this study contends that insofar as it was implemented it was made to work for the military campaign, even if on paper many of the respective goals clashed. This thesis shows in detail how that happened.

Chapter 2 showed that the first DDR programme, despite being part of the international community's state building agenda on paper and despite it being presented in state building language, was in fact less about long-term aims like building up the state's ability to achieve a monopoly on the use of force, and more about short-term political expediency, like securing the elections. This is clear from internal memos and from the fact that DDR was hastily initiated while the other 'pillars' of the state building agenda, which, according to the main state building policies that nominally informed the intervention are mutually reinforcing and should be initiated in tandem, were neglected.

This less-than-ideal situation from a state building perspective could, however, perhaps still be chalked up to the inescapable gap between theory and reality that all international interventions face. From this viewpoint, one could conclude, as many have done, that the state building agenda was simply too ambitious for the messy and incoherent reality of international coalitions operating in fragile states.

But when one also takes into account the political implications of the timing of the programme, its design and the way it was initiated, it becomes clear that ultimately the state building was always subordinate to the U.S. military campaign against the Taliban. By targeting only the AMF, and by excluding the large majority of reintegration participants from entry into the new ANA, the first DDR programme

was clearly designed to disband and render harmless the U.S.'s erstwhile allies, the former Northern Alliance factions. This could make sense from a state building perspective, as the programme aimed to disband militias and warlords standing in the way of strengthening state institutions. But this could only happen because once the Taliban were ousted, the U.S.' northern partners were no longer militarily useful. At the same time, the U.S. resisted the initiation of DDR in the south, where some AMF militias were still militarily useful. The targeting for disarmament of only some armed actors while other actors remain armed made sense from a narrow military perspective but not from a state building perspective.

The second part of chapter 2 examined the Afghan–led DIAG programme advocated by a westernised faction of the Karzai government. Their push for the disbandment of illegal armed groups was motivated by a commitment to the state building agenda, the advancement of which would make their own position stronger *vis-a-vis* other Kabul factions. It would also see the Afghan government wrest back control over militias from international patronage.

DIAG however encountered serious resistance. Some came from other Kabul factions and subnational officials and strongmen, who either opposed the programme as a whole or the targeting of specific figures. Another important challenge was the resistance of the international military, which was also reluctant to help the programme succeed. Not only were international military generally afraid to rock the boat in an already insecure situation, they were also protecting specific militias, namely those working alongside them. Chapter 2 details how they tried to keep 'their' militias exempt from DIAG, which means that the main legacy of DIAG is ironically the legitimatisation of (some) militias. As with DDR, overall military considerations clearly trumped state building considerations among key international actors.

Chapter 3 showed how the PTS and APRP programmes were both also primarily viewed as national security instruments by their main international backers, 'expected to deliver military and intelligence benefits, but wrapped in a language of peace and

reconciliation'.[635] International military considerations thus drove foreign support for Taliban reintegration programmes much as they had undermined earlier efforts to demobilise non-Taliban networks. To a great extent they also similarly determined their timing, design and implementation.

The U.S. government's wish to redeploy troops based in Afghanistan to Iraq triggered its support for the PTS. Foreign backing for the reintegration component of the APRP was motivated by a surge of military troops into Afghanistan, and a need in that context for a new surrender mechanism for insurgents. In terms of implementation the PTS was mostly an Afghan affair, apart from its prisoner release programme. The international military was however deeply involved in the implementation of the APRP, especially when the programme was first rolled out in northern provinces. Though on paper the APRP was the most elaborate DDR programme and included elements like grievance resolution, in reality just like the PTS it offered insurgents little more than surrender into the same political system that had led them to take up arms, though in some cases participants were integrated in the ALP or given other employment.

In sum, the post-2001 political context that the DDR programmes reflected was dominated by the political exclusion of the Taliban and the fight against them. The state building agenda's institution building approach, while focusing more on the technical and less on the political aspect of post-war reconstruction (the *what* but not the *who*), should, on paper, be politically inclusive by seeking to install a liberal democratic political system. It seeks to demobilise all warlords and strongmen and help them make the transition of armed groups into political parties.

A military campaign, on the other hand, is politically exclusive. It divides the political landscape into enemies and allies; enemies are fought, allies supported as long as they are useful. This was especially so in Afghanistan, where the Taliban were viewed as irreconcilable: thus during the greater part of the period this study covers the military campaign was not part of a broader political strategy geared towards reaching a settlement with the insurgents. Insurgents were offered the opportunity to surrender

[635] Suhrke et al. "Conciliatory Approaches," 9. The same was true for the APRP as explored in chapter 4.

and be demobilised at best, while, at the same time, allies were armed. Strongmen who were no longer useful could be demobilised.

6.2. Local impact of DDR

The second part of this thesis explored how DDR – best seen as part of the international military campaign and as an uneven process that targeted different groups in different ways and at different times – played out on the ground in the provinces. How did it impact the various armed powerbrokers? What did it mean for the power relations between them?

The case studies showed that on the whole Afghan powerbrokers in the provinces exploited the limited understanding their international counterparts had of local politics. This allowed them to capture the DDR process and limit its negative effects (like giving up arms or demobilising men) or, in some cases, even made it work for them. Many if not most commanders were able to keep their weapons after ousting the Taliban, and quite a few high-level powerbrokers in charge of or with close links to militias won prestigious positions in the ANP, ANA, the subnational government or parliament. The PTS and the APRP programmes were captured in the sense that most resources went to the pro-government establishment instead of to former Taliban, making it yet another money making venture emerging from the international intervention. Though this thesis is the first study to comprehensively examine the whole DDR process in Afghanistan since 2001, the assertion that Afghan actors captured (part of) this process has been made in other studies.[636]

This study, however, goes further by focusing on armed networks in the provinces, following the careers of individual commanders. Through this another picture emerges. There were vast differences in how DDR impacted particular commanders. Programmes deepened the pattern of political exclusion in place since 2001. Generally this caused a great increase in violence and instability and even played a

[636] Barnett and Zuercher, "The Peacebuilders Contract". Antonio Giustozzi, "Bureaucratic Façade and Political Realities of Disarmament and Demobilisation," in *Reintegrating Armed Groups After Conflict; Politics, Violence and Transition*, ed. Mats Berdal and David H. Ucko (Abingdon/New York: Routledge, 2009), 79, 83.

major role in the growing insurgency after 2005. DDR not only reflected but also deepened an exclusionary and predatory political order, which was shaped both by the international military campaign against the Taliban and by local allies using this narrative to advance the interests of their militarised patronage networks to the exclusion of others.

6.2.1. Armed strongmen compete for government positions

To assess the impact of DDR on the ground, the provincial case studies examined how the international agenda in Afghanistan played into local politics. Crucially, internationals and locals had radically different perceptions of the local political landscapes. The international narrative was shaped by the U.S.-led 2001 intervention, dividing the political landscape in allies and enemies. After the ousting of the Taliban regime the allies became 'the government' and the enemies 'the insurgents'. In this post 9/11 War on Terror narrative there were thus only two camps: a democratically-elected government on one side and religious extremist insurgents on the other. The ideological dividing line implied that loyalties were more or less a given.

Afghans, by contrast, saw a very different landscape, with a multitude of powerbrokers struggling for control; struggles that in some cases originated centuries back but that had turned especially violent in the past decades of war and now entered a new phase in the age of the War on Terror. These struggles reflected the many divisions in Afghanistan: along ethnic, tribal or sub-tribal, or religious lines; or between different regional and provincial warlords and strongmen. They showed tensions between tribal and religious codes of conduct and between urban centres and the countryside. These divisions played out on every level, from Kabul to small remote villages in Uruzgan. They intersected with global political developments, from British-Russian tensions in the 19th century to the Cold War in the 20th century and to the U.S. response to 9/11 in the 21st century. Resources provided by external donors to local allies fuelled divisions, tipping power struggles in one direction or the other.

Most Afghans, especially in the countryside, navigated this landscape by relying on patronage from power brokers higher up the food chain. Links could be forged along ethnic or tribal lines, or could be based on origins in the same village or having fought

in the same jihadi group. They were, however, rarely fixed. Clients tended to approach these links entrepreneurially, moving from one patron to another, depending on who could provide the best resources, whether financing, access to positions in the government or security forces, weapons or protection.

From this perspective the international intervention in 2001, just like previous international involvement in Afghanistan, offered enormous opportunity for patronage – but on an unprecedented scale. Power brokers at all levels, national, regional and local, jockeyed for a piece of the pie. The two main ways to obtain resources were through direct international funding (for example militias fighting the Taliban) or through a position in the internationally-funded government.

Locals could however only access these resources by playing into the War on Terror's international narrative and manipulating it for their own ends. They presented themselves as loyal allies against the ideologically-driven Taliban enemy.[637] Their foreign allies did not understand that their loyalty was conditioned on continued international resources. From the Afghans' perspective, however, this was implied in patron-client relationships. Relationships were fluid and a client could approach another patron at any time, if there was a better deal on offer.

The provincial strongmen featured in this thesis illustrate this dynamic. Like their counter parts elsewhere, they aimed to win government positions after the 2001 ousting of the Taliban. They were partly motivated by the immediate gains of capturing a share of the international resources flowing through the state, which could be used to rebuild patronage networks, particularly for the many of them that had been in exile. Partly they were motivated by the possibility such a position offered to stake a claim to long-term inclusion in the post-2001 political and military order. My findings support the assertion – outlined in the introduction – that Afghan powerbrokers are focused on inserting their militarised patronage networks into the state.

[637] See also on this dynamic Mike Martin's excellent account of the history of Helmand province, *An Intimate War*.

Not only Jan Mohammad in Uruzgan, but also Mir Alam in Kunduz, Amir Gul in Baghlan and Malem Mir Wali in Helmand elbowed their way into government appointments; the first as provincial governor under the patronage of President Karzai and the others as commanders in the AMF under the patronage of Defense Minister Fahim. Their respective positions offered them prestige, protection (both physical and of their illegal business ventures), easier access to international contracts and a way to distribute patronage to followers. Access to weapons and retaining the option of mobilising armed men was key, even though violence was rarely used openly. It was by virtue of maintaining the threat of violence that strongmen could retain power and avoid challenges from rivals.

Having presented themselves as loyal allies against the Taliban, strongmen also manipulated the international narrative to exclude weaker personal rivals from the government. They denounced competitors as Taliban, regardless of whether they had been or not. International troops often acted on their intelligence. Countless examples illustrate that many wrong people were arrested, with some sent to Guantanamo, or bombed.

In other cases, strongmen pursued rivals themselves, often justifying that by labelling them as Taliban who still had weapons and had to be 'disarmed'. These rounds of informal disarmament were often accompanied by harassment and even killings. But international support meant that strongmen operated with impunity. Provincial administrations became exclusionary and predatory, serving only a few powerbrokers and their followers, while making life increasingly difficult for the rest. Unsurprisingly, many of those targeted for 'disarmament' in these early years, joined Taliban leaders who were reorganising their movement across the border after 2004. Those joining up included many who had not supported the Taliban before 2001, illustrating the fluidity of loyalties.

Connections to the new Kabul government and to the international troops were key. The first years after 2001 led to the exclusion of those with the weakest ties by those who were best connected. In the northeast, Pashtun communities lost out. They had been favoured by the Taliban regime and opposed by non-Pashtun powerbrokers. The latter now used their ties to Panjshiri patrons in Kabul to gain positions in the

provincial administration. Pashtuns were cast as 'Taliban'. In the southwest the same was true for some sub-tribes and clans.

6.2.2. Demobilised strongmen become spoilers

As described above, in a first phase of the international intervention (fall and winter 2001/2002) local political landscapes were divided into 'allies' and 'enemies', while in a second phase (2002) respective positions were consolidated as 'government' and 'terrorists' (later called 'insurgents'). The first DDR programme, starting in 2003, marked a third phase, namely of state building. This envisaged, in the security sector, militias making way for a new and professionally trained army untainted by jihadi allegiances.

On paper it looked like a natural next step. The previous government had been overthrown and in its wake a collapsed state needed to be constructed. The U.S.-led coalition overthrowing the Taliban regime had not planned for 'the day after'. The liberal state building agenda that had dominated recent international interventions elsewhere filled the vacuum. In Kabul, international and Afghan officials discussed 'transitional justice'; 'security sector reform' and 'disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programmes'.

The reality in the provinces was different, both from the perspective of international troops and that of their Afghan allies. The military campaign and its narrative of the fight against the Taliban continued to dominate the international troops' agenda. State building imperatives, such as demobilising non-state armed actors, received much shorter shrift. Naturally, their local allies had little incentive to demobilise. If anything, they were determined to keep their weapons and government positions, as they saw their rivals remain armed.

From the international perspective, by 2003 the needs of the military campaign had shifted, however. After the Taliban's defeat, its opponents – Northern Alliance commanders – in Kunduz and Baghlan had outlasted their original military purpose. In Helmand and Uruzgan the situation was different. The hunt for 'remnants of the Taliban and al-Qaeda' continued, with local strongmen and their militias needed for

military operations. Yet as the U.S. had delayed the initiation of DDR to 2004 there had to be some form of compliance with the programme, including in the southwest.

International military moved militias they could still use from the AMF to the irregular Afghan Security Guards, Highway Police or elsewhere. Those no longer useful could stay in the AMF and face DDR. In the northeast that meant most of the international forces' local allies from the 2001 intervention were given up for DDR, whereas in the southwest only some had to enter the programme.

In these early years, to avoid DDR through international military support local allies had to keep manipulating the narrative of the fight against the Taliban. In Uruzgan, AMF sub-commander Matiullah's family ties with strongman governor Jan Mohammad, who international troops saw as the main bulwark against the enemy, were crucial in his becoming Highway Police commander. In Helmand Haji Kaduz positioned himself to aid international troops in their hunt for Taliban. Naturally it was easier to adopt this strategy in the Taliban heartland of the southwest than in the northeast, where by 2003 AMF militias were openly fighting each other and were seen as the main security problem.

Connections to patrons in Kabul offered another way of politically and militarily surviving DDR, either through an appointment in the police or in the civilian administrations. 6th Corps commander General Daud Daud obtained an attractive position in the Ministry of Interior as deputy minister for counter narcotics. In Baghlan 20th division commander Mustafa Mohseni became Logar police chief.

In short, connections to international troops and national government patrons were again critical for local powerbrokers to survive DDR with their influence and – in many cases – their militias, intact. Those that had strong connections even profited as their less well-connected rivals were demobilised. In Uruzgan Jan Mohammad saw his position strengthened by the demobilisation of his Barakzai rivals. In Helmand Sher Mohammad Akhunzada and Haji Kaduz profited from Malem Mir Wali's demobilisation. In the northeast General Daud Daud's rival Mir Alam was demobilised. Although demobilisation as such did not mean much – everyone retained weapons and ties to armed men or militias – the loss of a government

position severely undermined the ability of those targeted to dispend patronage. Without resources it was difficult to mobilise men, who would seek another paymaster.

Much like the informal, disarmament rounds in 2001, the first official DDR programme strengthened those with strong ties to patrons in Kabul and international forces, and excluded those who did not. It deepened the pattern of political exclusion set in motion by the military campaign that was characterised by an international narrative of the fight against the Taliban and local allies' manipulation of that narrative to exclude personal rivals in decades-old power struggles.

Around 2005, when the DIAG programme started, alliances between international troops and local allies shifted again in the southwest. The deployment of non-U.S. forces to Helmand and Uruzgan was conditioned on the removal of local strongmen from their positions. Moreover, SOF had started to realise that these strongmen, despite positioning themselves as bulwarks against the Taliban, actually behaved in ways that made them part of the problem. In Uruzgan Jan Mohammad was fired, as was Helmand governor Sher Mohammad Akhunzada and police chief Abdul Rahman Jan. Helmandi National Security Directorate Chief Dad Mohammad demobilised under DIAG so as to take part in the 2005 parliamentary elections. The removal of strongmen from provincial politics (some of whom were appointed in the national government) broke some of the strongest patronage relationships that had been established between international troops and local allies after 2001.

After demobilising under DDR or DIAG programmes or being fired from a position in the provincial government, erstwhile local allies started looking elsewhere for paymasters and protectors to compensate for the loss of international patronage – in keeping with a tradition of fluid relationships that was well understood by Afghans but not by Westerners. The Taliban leadership in Pakistan offered an alternative. Some men completely switched sides but most hedged their bets and kept ties on both sides. This was especially true for strongmen who were still solidly supported by patrons in the Kabul government.

Different motivations played a role at different levels. For the rank-and-file it was often about keeping a job and an income, or about following a commander who had decided it was time to find a new paymaster. For district-level commanders the loss of prestige and the need to keep opium interests and other illegal business ventures protected were often important. For provincial-level strongmen strategic considerations came into play. If their provinces were destabilised, international troops would have no other choice than to seek their support anew.

Interestingly, the shift of allegiances that took place in these years, partly as a result of DDR programmes, did not challenge the international narrative. On the contrary, Afghan allies again used that narrative to their advantage, strengthening it in the process. If Taliban were what international troops wanted, then Taliban they would get. In previous stages local allies had branded their rivals 'Taliban', but now the former allies who had been cast aside, either through DDR programmes or because their dismissal had been requested by non-U.S. NATO members, started operating under that flag themselves or helping those who did.

The strongmen's strategy, based on long experience in dealing with national and international patrons, was successful. As 'the Taliban' grew in the southwest after 2005 and in the northeast after 2007, so did the international troops' desire to fund irregular militias to counter them, including through the semi-formal ALP programme. In Kunduz Mir Alam made a successful come back, as did Amir Gul in Baghlan and Malem Mir Wali in Helmand (even if, in the case of Mir Wali, behind the scenes). In Uruzgan, where Matiullah had outmanoeuvred his uncle Jan Mohammed, he profited immensely from the Taliban making inroads into Uruzgan.

In the years since the removal of some strongmen from their provincial government positions, through DDR, DIAG and ad-hoc firings, more professionally trained government officials without jihadi backgrounds had been appointed from outside the provinces. Without local clout they were, however, still beholden to the old jihadi establishment, part of which had moved into the national government (for example Jan Mohammad, Sher Mohammad Akhunzada and General Daud Daud) and part of which operated underground (those with weaker connections such as Mir Alam and Amir Gul).

The new official, semi-official and irregular militia initiatives that sprang up after the insurgency spread across Afghanistan after 2008 proved to be an enormous boon for this old establishment. The establishment had more resources than at any time since the 2001 intervention to hunt down rivals by labelling them Taliban, especially in the northeast. Strongmen even profited from the well-funded Taliban reintegration programme APRP, as the example of Sher Mohammad Akhunzada in Helmand shows.

This meant that even if provincial administrations in some cases appeared slightly more inclusive, in reality local politics became more exclusionary, further deepening the pattern of political exclusion set in motion by the military campaign against the Taliban. Unsurprisingly, while 'Taliban' were beaten back temporarily in many places – partly because strongmen's followers switched sides again and started operating as part of the anti-Taliban militias – they returned in larger numbers once the ANP, ANA and militias retreated.

To summarise the above, neither the international military operating in provinces nor their local allies, nor their patrons in Kabul, had much interest in demobilising militias under internationally-funded DDR programmes. The use of specific militias for international troops however shifted along with changes in the military campaign against the Taliban. From the international perspective local allies who were no longer useful could be demobilised. This policy however did not take into account the fact that discarded allies unable to compensate for the loss of international patronage with support from patrons in Kabul, would look towards the insurgency for resources. Provincial strongmen in many cases combined support from patrons in Kabul with ties to the insurgency, so as to deliberately destabilise what they considered as 'their' areas, leaving international troops no choice but to ask them back.

This illustrates the superficiality of the War on Terror narrative, which drew a line in the sand between the government and the Taliban in what was in fact a fragmented and crowded political landscape. To some extent these two camps gradually became a reality as the U.S. and its allies funded 'the government' and other countries and private donors who opposed the new Afghan government started funding Taliban

leaders in Pakistan. Afghan powerbrokers pursuing U.S. resources flowing in after 2001, and resources offered by the Taliban leadership in Pakistan after 2004, strengthened these two power centres. Just below the surface, of course, the two "camps" comprised many different factions or patronage networks that forever shifted in strength as the sources of and access to resources changed.

This meant, paradoxically, that while the international narrative of the two camps – a democratically elected and foreign backed government being challenged by a religious extremist Taliban insurgency – became reality in the sense that Afghan powerbrokers flocked to the resources that the respective camps offered, the exact opposite was also true. To hedge against resources in one camp drying up it was necessary to have a foot in both camps. Ties between the two camps often ran along the traditional lines of kinship, coming from the same village or having a shared battlefield experience, and could be strengthened or loosened according to circumstances. DDR programmes played a key role, even if only in a psychological sense, in ensuring that no one put all his eggs in one basket. International military troops, by trying to demobilise those who were no longer deemed useful in the fight against the Taliban, alienated their clients and created more armed resistance.

6.3. Impact of DDR on state formation

The last question to be addressed here is how the local impact of DDR programmes in turn influenced state formation; a long-running project that after 2001 became heavily interlinked with the international project in Afghanistan. The conventional wisdom on DDR as a function of state building is that by demobilising warlords, insurgents and other non-state armed actors, or integrating them into state security forces, it helps them become invested in the state, deals with potential spoilers, strengthens state institutions and gives the state a monopoly on the use of armed force. How did DDR as a function of a military campaign against the Taliban impact state formation in Afghanistan?

Among the main challenges to the Afghan state in the period this study covers was the insurgency, which grew stronger over time. As discussed above, those excluded from the post-2001 political order tended to become spoilers and perpetrate anti-

government violence whereas powerbrokers included in that order had an interest in supporting it. Inclusion or exclusion was partly managed through DDR programmes.

Those included were not, however, necessarily state builders, just as those excluded did not always become Taliban. Many powerbrokers included in the government ended up preying on and excluding rivals and their communities, generating local support for the insurgency, and thus indirectly undermining the state. In Uruzgan DDR for example strengthened the hand of governor Jan Mohammad, who played a major part in triggering the violence that soon engulfed his province. Nor did many of those excluded from government end up with the insurgency, but instead chose to operate in pro-government militias. In Kunduz, for example, after the growth of the insurgency in 2008, strongman Mir Alam mobilised men to fight the Taliban, even though he had no official position.

My findings suggest that a key factor in motivating sub-national actors was the level of support by Kabul political factions or international troops; a factor that DDR programmes reflected in their impact on particular powerbrokers. High levels of outside support, though they could nominally tie powerbrokers to the state, tended to be detrimental for state formation in that they removed incentives for them to bargain with the local population and win their support. This was the case both for those who had government positions and those who commanded pro-government militias.

Jan Mohammad in Uruzgan and Sher Mohammad Akhundzada in Helmand were close allies of President Karzai, who consistently backed them. In addition, SOF were still active in this area and supported both governors' militias. In Helmand they also supported the militia of Malem Mir Wali, the commander of the 93rd Division. It is no coincidence that these men established highly predatory and exclusionary local political orders, which were soon challenged by the insurgency: both operated in a framework determined by outsiders and disconnected from the local population's wishes and needs.

After the ousting of the Taliban regime many Afghans hoped for law and order and predictable dispute resolution. International actors, however, focused on fight against the Taliban. Allied local strongmen exploited this agenda to eliminate personal rivals.

Political factions in Kabul sought to strengthen only their own patronage networks, which the strongmen again used to get rid of competitors. As a result, the strongmen obtained capital and had coercive power but their local support was limited – because they were not forced to win local communities over – and their local administrations were soon challenged by a growing insurgency.

Armed powerbrokers who were excluded from the government and who did not want to demobilise faced the choice of continuing to operate as pro-government militia commanders or to join the insurgency. Again, a key factor in considerations of sub-national actors was the level of support from political factions in Kabul and from international forces. Mir Alam is a good example of someone who profited from both sources of external support – government and foreign troops – when he expanded his militia around 2008.

His reliance of outside support meant, however, that his militia did not contribute to state building. Because of outside backing for Mir Alam's militias, villagers were unable to negotiate with them and the armed men could prey on locals with impunity. Their predation – including illegal taxation, kidnapping, rape and killings, the general violence generated by their presence and fighting with other militias about the right to tax communities, as well as the lack of options for legal redress for the villagers in the face of political backing for the militias from Kabul officials – resulted in increasing local support for the insurgency.

In his book on the making of national states in Europe between 990 and 1992, Charles Tilly writes that capital and coercion were key factors, which included the disarmament of the local population and the creation of a standing army under government control. However, these elements, capital and coercion, only led to the formation of national states because the state was forced to bargain with its citizens to draw resources from them to wage wars. The monopolisation of armed force could only happen through the monopolisation of taxation, which necessitated bargaining with citizens. Credit, including from bankers abroad, also played a role.[638]

[638] Tilly, *Coercion, Capital*, 85, 86.

> The play of alliances and the attempt to draw resources from relatively powerful or mobile actors promoted the state's involvement in protection, checking the competitors and enemies of selected clients. As extraction and protection expanded, they created demands for adjudication of disputes within the subject population, including the legal regularization of both extraction and protection themselves. Over time, the weight and impact of state activities ... – adjudication, production, and distribution – grew faster than those at the top: warmaking, statemaking, extraction, and protection.[639]

States' pursuit of war and military capacity, 'after having created national states as a sort of by-product', paradoxically ended up creating predominantly civilian governments in Europe. Tilly himself already noted that this was not a standard trajectory and pointed to the external imposition of army models, aid and training in the 'Third World' as a key factor changing the outcome there, and increasing instability.[640]

> Where the ability or rulers to draw revenues from commodity exports or from great-power military aid has allowed them to bypass bargaining with their subject populations, large state edifices have grown up in the absence of significant consent or support from citizens. Lacking strong ties between particular state institutions and major social classes within the population, those states have become more vulnerable to forcible seizures of power and abrupt changes in the form of government.[641]

Since Tilly's book, much research has examined the distortionary influence of external 'rent' on state formation.[642] Barnett Rubin and Astri Suhrke examined the topic in the context of state formation in Afghanistan. Rubin argues that from the time Afghanistan entered the international state system after the second Anglo-Afghan War (1878-1870) the consolidation of the central state depended on foreign aid. This meant that 'the old regime was hardly accountable to the state's citizens: there was little taxation and little representation'. It focused on expansion of the state and on redistributing resources to clients. Social and economic integration remained low, and

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639 Tilly, *Coercion, Capital*, 97.
640 Tilly, *Coercion, Capital*, 122, 206.
641 Tilly, *Coercion, Capital*, 207, 208.
642 See, for example, Deborah A. Bräutigam and Stephen Knack, "Foreign Aid, Institutions, and Governance in Sub-Saharan Africa," *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 52:2 (January 2004): 255-285.

social structures in Afghanistan 'are local and based on kinship or religious distinctions'.[643]

Suhrke examined the impact of aid on the post-2001 international state building project, for which, according to her, the key pillars were coercion, capital and legitimacy. Of these pillars legitimacy, or 'the enhanced power of rulers to access [coercion and capital] by appearing as legitimate', was seen as 'particularly valuable because it facilitates non-coercive compliance by generating normative support'. Suhrke argues that the fact that the ample capital and armed force was supplied by external powers, however, created a deficit of legitimacy.[644]

This study confirms that the post-2001 Afghan state lacked legitimacy, though not primarily as a result of international state building efforts but as a result of the military campaign against the Taliban (in which state building efforts such as DDR played a key role). The continuous flow of foreign funds to officials, who used those funds to pursue personal goals through the externally imposed anti-Taliban agenda, alienated the population from the government in the provinces. This alienation generated local support for an insurgency that became the main challenge to the state, and to attempts to control the means of coercion.

As foreign powers began to perceive the Afghan state as failing in establishing legitimacy, around 2008 their rhetoric moved away from focusing on strengthening state institutions to strengthening informal actors. They funded new militia programmes such as the ALP and attempted to foster informal justice initiatives. In academic and policy-oriented literature, there was a parallel shift around the same time to a revalorisation of informal actors and bottom-up initiatives as opposed to the state-centric and top-down state building agenda.[645]

This study argues that these international initiatives to support informal actors, initiatives that in reality had existed since the ousting of the Taliban regime, suffered

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643 Barnett Rubin, "Rentier State Building, Rentier State Wrecking," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 24:1 (1992), 79, 82.
644 Suhrke, *When More is Less*, 118, 148, 154.
645 Goodhand and Hakimi, "Rethinking Liberal Peace Building," 243.

from the same problems as foreign-funded initiatives to strengthen the state. Informal powerbrokers were accountable to the external donors that paid them, not to the local population. Though in the distant past informal actors such as tribal leaders in the south and khans in the north may have had much local legitimacy (a history that international actors eagerly seized on to legitimise their 'bottom-up' initiatives), they owed this to the fact that they were primarily accountable to their communities. The decades of externally-funded war had produced different types of local leaders, men who were focused on capturing external revenue, and who could enforce their will on their communities. Local councils such as the *jirga* and *shura*, were no longer platforms for establishing consensus, but served to add a superficial layer of legitimacy to strongmen's decisions. The massive post-2001 flow of external funds to these strongmen resulted in their violent suppression of dissent and in widespread resistance against them.

The legacy for state formation of DDR programmes, which were one of the mechanisms through which outside support to particular groups was given or withheld, is thus highly problematic. Many of those who lost their government position due to DDR began to operate against the state. But those who were well-connected and thus moved into attractive government posts and saw their positions strengthened because rivals were disarmed, or profited from resources that DDR programmes such as the APRP generated, also did not help to strengthen the state. On the contrary, they used the state's resources to distribute patronage to followers while excluding rivals and even persecuting them as part of the international military campaign; actions that contributed to the growing insurgency.

In sum, local powerbrokers' reliance on the international rent, whether through the Afghan state or directly, combined with foreign troops' support, provided them with capital and the means of coercion. But it undermined their legitimacy as it took away the need to bargain with the local population. This inherently distortionary quality of international rent, access to which was partly regulated through DDR programmes, was aggravated by the fact that most foreign funds were spent on a military campaign against the Taliban; a campaign that local partners used to establish predatory and exclusionary provincial administrations. As the state could neither suppress excluded

groups nor was willing to accommodate them, many turned to the insurgency, which became the main challenge to strengthening the central state.

It is not surprising that today the foreign military involvement in Afghanistan – with local alliances managed partly through DDR programmes – seems to have become an important point of contention between the government and the Taliban. The side that profits from having foreign troops in Afghanistan wants to keep them; the side that has suffered as a result of it wants them out. Formal and informal talks between the two sides are stranded partly due to differences on this point; differences that seem unbridgeable.[646]

It was not always so. Anand Gopal points to the fact that in 2001 Taliban leaders were initially not against the Karzai government and the presence of foreign troops and (apart from Mullah Omar) were willing to negotiate a deal (surrender and disarmament in return for amnesty). It was the behaviour of the new leaders – who abused former Taliban under the pretext of disarmament – and foreign troops that turned Taliban leaders against foreign involvement. The Taliban regime in the 1990s, for example, though it did not request the presence of foreign troops, did actively seek foreign aid.[647]

Thus the real issue between the two sides revolves not around ideological differences on the involvement of 'infidels' in Afghanistan. Instead it hinges, at least partly, around the uneven access to foreign support, including funds; funds that to a large extent are contingent on having foreign troops present. This is not to say that the Taliban will now suddenly accept foreign military involvement if they can benefit from it – their harsh rhetoric against foreign occupiers would make that difficult – but at its core the conflict is about political not ideological differences.

As mentioned in the introduction, Mats Berdal points to the importance of a political settlement that takes into account the formal and informal distribution of 'power,

[646] Borhan Osman and Anand Gopal, "Taliban Views on a Future State," *Center on International Cooperation*, July 2016.
[647] Gopal, "The Taliban in Kandahar".

influence and resources within society'.[648] This study wholeheartedly supports this assessment. Its main focus, however, is different. Berdal and others critique the state building approach that focuses on strengthening state institutions and formal actors. They argue that in weak states like Afghanistan, instead, there should be much more attention to informal actors. The findings in this study – which does not cover the whole state building effort like Berdal, Suhrke and other authors, but nevertheless examined in depth an important component of it, namely DDR – support the notion that foreign donors should pay more attention to informal actors, or formal actors that also have much informal influence, as they often hold the real power. At the same time, these informal actors often suffer from the same lack of legitimacy as the state.

What is critical, this study contends, is that political settlements in weak states are inclusive. The Afghan state never had a choice but to balance between different armed groups, since it has lacked both strong and credible state institutions and the state-supporting institutions of civil society that could provide alternative sources of authority to local leaders, as well as the armed forces to crush opponents. This means that it has to find a way to accommodate the main militarised patronage networks, which, in Afghanistan, includes the Taliban – even though accommodating them may carry risks, including for democracy, as Marissa Quie and others argue. [649]. International actors viewing groups like the Taliban as irreconcilable and continuing the military campaign against them without a broader political strategy geared towards an inclusive settlement will only generate more violence against the state.

The Taliban, just as many other armed groups labelled as 'terrorist' or 'violent extremist' would not be able to operate without significant local support and without

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[648] Berdal, "Afghanistan and After" in *Rethinking State Fragility*, 12.

[649] This study examines the issue of inclusivity from the viewpoint of how to advance demilitarisation. Many in Afghanistan and outside are, however, concerned that including Taliban in the government will negatively affect democratic politics (see, for example Marissa Quie's insightful study on the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme, Quie, "Peacebuilding and Democracy Promotion"). This study has not explored the Taliban's stance towards democratic politics, but other authors have done so – recently for example Osman and Gopal (Osman and Gopal, "Taliban Views"). The case studies show, however, that many of those currently in the government are unfortunately not necessarily more democratically minded than the Taliban (though they may hold more liberal views regarding women's rights and the implementation of Sharia law).

help from regional powers. In analysing the insurgency that currently challenges Afghan state building, this study focuses on local support. It argues that the political exclusion of major communities in Afghanistan after 2001 has made them turn towards the insurgency for protection, prestige and profit. This dynamic can also be observed in other parts of the world, and should remind international actors intervening in weak states that political accommodation is key.

6.4. The future of DDR in Afghanistan

Between 2001 and 2014 – the period that this study covers – DDR was, on paper, part of the international state building project; in reality, however, it was used to further the military campaign against the Taliban. DDR programmes were utilised to regulate access to foreign funds and support, by aiming to demobilise some armed groups, while at the same time others were armed. This meant that it was an uneven process, targeting different groups in different ways and at different times. As commanders knew that rivals remained armed, and felt unjustly targeted, they resisted disarmament and, instead, sought new paymasters to expand their armed groups.

DDR is now a tainted concept in Afghanistan. At the same time, the current level of militarisation will make it difficult to forge a sustainable peace. Even if real demilitarisation will not happen for many years, and possibly never fully, a political settlement – however distant the prospect for one including the Taliban currently appears – will need to address the issue of demilitarisation, even if indirectly.

The primary way it can do so is by being inclusive. Second, though, any provisions on demobilisation should be framed in a manner acceptable to the main militarised patronage networks. Armed groups should not have to demobilise before their rivals. This would be a departure from previous approaches. Opportunities to integrate into the national and subnational government, or to keep government posts – the main aim of militarised patronage networks – could be conditioned on demobilisation of non-state armed groups (including state-sanctioned militias). The security forces, which could at first be kept at maximum capacity so as to serve as a reintegration vehicle, would likely have to be reorganised to include groups that have previously been

excluded. Integration should to the degree possible happen individually instead of collectively, so as to break patronage networks that could split the army in the future.

This study shows that demobilisation can happen fast in Afghanistan, but that remobilisation can happen just as fast. Even if affiliations are never static, powerbrokers retain connections to their former fighters, also in peacetime. Some connections run along tribal lines, others are based on shared time in the trenches – during the mujahedeen era, years of Taliban rule or post-2001 fighting – on village ties or, most often, on some combination of these. In times of need, or when there is a new paymaster, former fighters can be quickly gathered for another fight.

At the same time, my research findings show that when powerbrokers integrate into the government and feel their interests are better served in the civilian rather than military sphere, these connections can weaken over time. This also means that especially mid-level commanders with few connections to political patrons in Kabul and no experience off the battlefield will feel threatened and need to be taken care of, probably by integrating them in the army or the police. If demilitarisation ever happens in Afghanistan, it will be a long process, which will depend on political inclusivity – giving enough people a stake in the state.

6.5. How the Afghan DDR experience can inform future demilitarisation elsewhere

While this thesis aims to contribute to the debate on how to eventually demilitarise Afghanistan, it can also inform DDR elsewhere. Of course, extracting from a particular situation general rules that are then applied more broadly, in radically different settings, requires caution. The Afghan DDR experience is a case in point: programmes, especially the first one, were modelled on DDR experiences from Africa in the 1990s. This was problematic because not only were the interests of foreign donors, the nature of armed groups and the global and normative environments radically different, but also DDR in the way it had been applied in Africa in the 1990s

had already been a case of 'doctrinal stretching'.[650] Nor had lessons learned from Africa in the 1990s necessarily been the right ones, even there.

That said, DDR in Afghanistan does offer lessons that might serve as a starting point for a new debate on demilitarisation in war-torn states. This debate may seem remote from the wars now raging across the Middle East and North Africa, but it will at some point become relevant in that region, as current levels of armament there are as are unsustainable for long-term peace as those in Afghanistan. A debate on demilitarisation in war-torn countries might even help force a rethink of the DDR concept laid out in documents such as the IDDRS.

My overarching finding is that DDR is shaped by the main contours of the political context in which it is initiated and, in turn, deepens them. The current DDR concept, as laid out in the IDDRS, harks back to the European experience of demobilising conventional armies after inter-state wars. Then in the 1990s DDR programmes took place mostly after peace agreements between warring parties in African, Latin American and Asian civil wars. While programmes suffered many flaws, if done well they offered a way to reinforce the new peace by disarming and demobilising potential spoilers and by offering them alternative employment.

But times have changed. The recent peace agreement between the FARC (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* or Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) rebels and the Colombian government, which contains provisions on DDR, nowadays seems the exception rather than the rule. More often today DDR programmes are initiated in the midst of wars with no end in sight – witness those in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Libya, Mali, Somalia and the Sudans as well as Afghanistan. In these countries, DDR in effect means that armed groups are asked to lay down their weapons while fighting continues, or while there is a major risk that it will resume. This is a radically new environment for DDR.

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650 '[T]he creation of distortions by applying an aspect of doctrine developed in a specific historical and organizational set-up to new contexts'. Mutengesa, "Facile Acronyms". Berdal and Ucko, "Introduction – The political reintegration," 2, 3, 8.

In this environment – DDR programmes in the context of continued war – those programmes that have proven particularly problematic are those taking place in places where political exclusion is severe, for example in those countries on the sharp end of the war on terror – Afghanistan, of course, but also Iraq, Somalia and, to some degree, Libya. As the Afghan example shows, local allies of international forces can exploit foreign funded DDR programmes to rid themselves of rivals – deepening the existing pattern of political exclusion. Understandably those targeted resist disarmament, and will try to find alternative ways to defend themselves and remain armed, including by joining anti-government forces. In this way, DDR – used to strengthen those winning and demobilise those losing – promotes not peace, as some foreign donors expect, but war. This study shows that the first Afghan DDR programme after the ousting of the Taliban regime, despite on paper pursuing the laudable goal of demobilising warlords, played a major role in driving the insurgency in the mid-2000s.

Many of the war-ravaged states in which DDR now takes place are too weak to permanently exclude large groups without international support (and the recent advances of the Taliban, the Islamic State and al-Shabaab show that even with foreign support it is difficult). These states are unlikely any time soon to enjoy a monopoly on the use of armed force. Some have traditionally always negotiated with armed groups in their peripheries.

To survive they will have to accommodate all the main militarised patronage networks on their territory, including those labelled as ‘terrorist’ or ‘violent extremist’. These networks will not easily give up their ability to defend themselves and pursue their interests by force. At the same time most still tend to want a stake in the state, for the access to resources this offers and to be able to expend formal and informal power. This provides a bargaining chip for the state; a possibility to request demobilisation. International policymakers supporting weak states would thus be wiser to err on the side of political inclusivity rather than an agenda of war against certain groups and their permanent political exclusion. Only then is there a chance of demilitarisation.

DDR, in other words, needs to be supporting and supported by the creation of an *inclusive* political order.

ANNEX 1 – Interviewees

Below are general descriptions of interviewees (who are anonymous for a variety of reasons, including security considerations and institutional restrictions on officials and former officials). They are categorised by province (Kunduz, Baghlan, Uruzgan, Helmand and Kabul) and nationality (Afghan and non-Afghan). Also included is the ethnicity of Afghan interviewees in the northeast and their tribal affiliation in the southwest; although this information is sensitive it is relevant.

Kunduz

001 Former 54th Division commander in Kunduz (Tajik).
002 ALP official (Pashtun).
003 Member of the Lower House of the Wolesi Jirga from Kunduz (Pashtun).
004 Former national government official from Kunduz (in Karzai administration 2004-2009) (Pashtun).
005 Local Pashtun powerbroker and militia commander in Khanabad.
006 ALP commander in Aliabad district.
007 Former 54th Division commander in Kunduz (Tajik).
008 Former high-ranking provincial official in Karzai administration 2009-2014.
009 Tribal elder from Kanam village near Kunduz City (Pashtun).
010 DIAG official operating in northern Afghanistan.
011 Independent Directorate of Local Governance official from Kunduz province.
012 Ministry of Interior official from Kunduz (Pashtun).
013 Tribal elder from Kunduz province (Pashtun).
014 Inhabitant of Hazrat-e-Sultan village near Kunduz city (Pashtun).
015 Inhabitant from Aleke Kanam village near Kunduz city (Pashtun).
016 Former 54th commander and jihadi commander from Chahardara district (Tajik).
017 High-ranking provincial official (Pashtun).
018 APRP official in Kunduz.
019 High-ranking official in national government from Imam Saheb (Uzbek).
020 ALP commander in Aliabad (Pashtun).
021 APRP participant from Qala-e Zal district (Pashtun).
022 Security official from Khanabad district, Kunduz province (Tajik).
023 High-ranking ALP commander in Kunduz City (Pashtun).
024 Official in Khanabad district (Tajik).
025 High-ranking provincial security official linked to Shura-ye Nazar faction Jamiat-i-Islami (Tajik).
026 Member of the provincial peace council (APRP) (Pashtun).

Baghlan

100 Taliban commander operating in Dahan-e Ghori district.
101 High-ranking provincial official (Pashtun).
102 ANP official in Baghlan-e Jadid (Pashtun).
103 Tribal elder from Dahan-e Ghori, former jihadi and AMF commander (Pashtun).
104 Former Hezb-e Islami and AMF commander in Baghlan-e Jadid (Pashtun).
105 Former Hezb-e Islami and AMF commander in Baghlan-e Jadid (Pashtun).

106 Former jihadi commander in Baghlan-e Jadid (Tajik).
107 Former jihadi and AMF commander in Baghlan-e Jadid, now provincial official (Pashtun).
108 Local informal powerbroker affiliated with Jamiat-e Islami.
109 Member of the provincial peace council (APRP).
110 APRP participant from Dahan-e Ghori district (Pashtun).
111 APRP participant from Pul-e Khumri district (Pashtun).
112 Taliban commander operating in Baghlan-e Jadid (Pashtun).
113 Shadow district chief for Taliban in Dahan-e Ghori district.
114 APRP participant from Baghlan-e Jadid, assassinated in 2013 (Pashtun).
115 Relative of APRP participant (Pashtun).
116 Taliban commander from Dahan-e Ghori.
117 APRP participant from Dahan-e Ghori.
118 Member of the provincial council (Tajik).
119 Village elder in Baghlan-e Jadid.
120 ALP commander in Baghlan-e Jadid (Pashtun).
121 APRP participant.
122 Member of the provincial council (Pashtun).
123 Local journalist.
124 Provincial security official.
125 Tribal elder from Baghlan-e Jadid (Pashtun).
126 Tribal elder from Dand-e Ghori.
127 Provincial-level official and former jihadi and AMF commander in Baghlan-e Jadid.
128 APRP participant from Baghlan-e Jadid.
129 Government official from Baghlan province.
130 Tribal elder from Baghlan-e Jadid (Pashtun).
131 ALP commander in Baghlan-e Jadid.
132 Former jihadi commander, now businessman from Baghlan-e Jadid (Tajik).
133 Tribal elder in Baghlan-e Jadid.
134 Doctor from Baghlan, working in Kabul hospital.
135 Tribal elder in Baghlan-e Jadid (Pashtun).
136 ALP commander from Baghlan-e Jadid.
137 Member of provincial council (Pashtun).
138 High-ranking provincial official.
139 APRP participant from Baghlan-e Jadid.
140 High-ranking provincial official (Pashtun).
141 High-ranking provincial official (Pashtun).
142 Shadow district chief of the Taliban in Dahan-e Ghori (Pashtun).
143 Taliban commander in Dahan-e Ghori (Pashtun).
144 Former shadow governor Taliban Baghlan.
145 Taliban commander in Baghlan-e Jadid
146 Tribal elder from Dand-e Ghori area of Pul-e Khumri.
147 Tribal elder in Dand-e Ghori area of Pul-e Khumri.
148 Tribal elder from Dand-e Ghori area of Pul-e Khumri.
149 High-ranking provincial security official.
150 High-ranking provincial security official.

Uruzgan

200 Tokhi tribesman, former jihadi commander.
201 Member of the provincial peace council (Tokhi), killed in 2016.
202 Provincial-level official from Deh Rawod.
203 Alikozai tribesman.
204 Member of the provincial peace council (Popalzai).
205 Popalzai tribesman and former jihadi commander.
206 Former NDS official.
207 ALP official (Popolzai)
208 Former NDS official.
209 District-level official in Shaheed Hassas (Noorzai).
210 Former member of the provincial council and former jihadi commander from Deh Rawod (Popalzai).
211 Provincial-level official from outside Uruzgan.
212 Hotak tribesman from Tirin Kot district.
213 Hotak tribesman from Tirin Kot district, killed in 2015.
214 Provincial level official (Achekzai).
215 ANP commander in Tirin Kot district (Popalzai).
216 Barakzai tribesman, former jihadi commander.
217 District-level official in Shaheed Hasas (Noorzai).
218 Barakzai tribesman from Chora district, killed in 2014.
219 Former high-ranking provincial official from outside Uruzgan.
220 Barakzai tribesman from Chora district.
221 Provincial-level official from Tirin Kot district.
222 Provincial-level security official from Tirin Kot district.
223 Villager from Tirin Kot district (Hotak).
224 Barakzai tribesman and former jihadi commander.
225 ALP commander from Shaheed Hassas.
226 High-ranking provincial official (Hazara).
227 Taliban commander operating in Tirin Kot district.
228 ANP official (Achekzai).
229 Former high-ranking provincial official from outside Uruzgan.
230 ALP commander and former Taliban commander from Gizab district (Achekzai).
231 Hotak villager in Tirin Kot district.
232 Alikozai tribesman from Deh Rawod district.
233 Alikozai tribesman from Deh Rawod district.
234 ANP commander in Tirin Kot district.
235 Member of provincial peace council (Barakzai).
236 Barakzai tribesman from Tirin Kot district.
237 Hotak villager from Tirin Kot district.
238 Taliban commander operating in Deh Rawod district.
239 Tokhi villager in Tirin Kot district.
240 Tokhi villager in Tirin Kot district.
241 Son of Alikozai tribesman and former district-level official in Deh Rawod district.
242 APRP official.
243 APRP participant.
244 Provincial police chief 2011-2015 (killed in 2015), former militia commander.

Helmand

300 Inhabitant of Nahr-e Seraj district (Achekzai).
301 Former Hezb-e Islami commander from Nahr-e Seraj district (Barakzai).
302 Villager in Nad-i Ali district (Kharoti).
303 ANP official from Nahr-e Seraj district, killed in 2015.
304 District-level official from Nad-e Ali district.
305 Taliban commander from Nahr-e Saraj district (Ishaqzai).
306 District-level official from Nad-e Ali district.
307 APRP official.
308 Taliban commander in Sangin district.
309 Taliban commander in Sangin district (Alikozai).
310 Taliban commander in Sangin district (Alikozai).
311 Taliban commander in Sangin district (Barakzai).
312 Taliban commander in Nad-e Ali district (Noorzai).
313 Taliban commander in Nad-e Ali district (Noorzai).
314 APRP participant.
315 Taliban commander in Nad-e Ali district (Kharoti).
316 Taliban commander in Nad-e Ali district (Alizai).
317 Barakzai tribesman in Nahr-e Saraj district.
318 Barakzai tribesman from Nahr-e Saraj district.
319 Barakzai tribesman from Nahr-e Saraj district.
320 ALP commander operating in Nahr-e Saraj district.
321 Former PTS official in Helmand province.
322 Former Hezb-e Islami and 93rd Division commander.
323 Former Hezb-e Islami and 93rd Division commander.
324 Taliban commander in Nahr-e-Seraj district.
325 Provincial-level official from Nahr-e-Seraj district.
326 Alikozai tribesman from Sangin district.
327 Alikozai tribesman from Sangin district.
328 Former high-level provincial official.
329 Alikozai tribesman from Sangin district.
330 Alikozai tribesman from Sangin district.
331 Taliban commander from Sangin district.
332 Ishaqzai tribesman from Nahr-e-Seraj district.
333 Ishaqzai tribesman from Najr-e Seraj district.
334 Local journalist.
335 ALP commander in Nahr-e-Seraj district.
336 Member of the provincial council.
337 Member of the provincial council.
338 Member of the provincial council.
339 Member of the provincial peace council.
340 Former PTS official.
341 Former high-ranking 93rd Division commander and former Hezb-e Islami commander (Barakzai).
342 Former high-ranking 93rd Division commander and former Hezb-e Islami commander (Barakzai).

Kabul

400 Member of parliament for Helmand.

401 Former Taliban official.
402 Former MoI official.
403 Former member of Hezb-e Islami party.
404 Member of the High Peace Council.
405 Member of the High Peace Council.
406 NDS official in Kabul.
407 Member of parliament for Kunduz.
408 Former Taliban official.
409 Member of parliament for Kunduz.
410 APRP official in Kabul.
411 APRP official in Kabul.
412 Senior government official.
413 Senior government official, previously involved in the DIAG programme.
414 Former senior MoI official.
415 Former Taliban official.
416 Governor of a northern province.
417 Member of parliament for Helmand.
418 Member of parliament for Uruzgan.
419 Member of parliament for Uruzgan province.
420 Former Ministry of Interior official.
421 Member of parliament for Baghlan.
422 Member of parliament for Kunduz.
423 Member of parliament for Kunduz.
424 Former senior official in Kabul.
425 Member of parliament for Baghlan.
426 Former senior MoI official.
427 Senior member of one of the former Northern Alliance parties.
428 Senior member of Shura-ye Nazar and former Ministry of Defense official.
429 Former Taliban official.
430 Analyst at research organisation.
431 Member of parliament for Uruzgan.
432 Former high-ranking Taliban official.
433 Senior ALP official.
434 ALP official from General Directorate ALP in Kabul.
435 Member of parliament for Baghlan.

International

500 Former DDR official.
501 Former UN official.
502 Former DIAG official.
503 British ministry of Foreign Affairs and Commonwealth official.
504 Former British officer.
505 EU official in Kabul.
506 ISAF officer in Kunduz.
507 Senior U.S. Embassy official.
508 UK Embassy official.
509 UN official in Baghlan.
510 USAID official in Baghlan.

511 Former DDR official.
512 Former senior DDR official.
513 Former DDR official.
514 Former DIAG official, former analyst for policy research organisation.
515 UNAMA official.
516 Senior ISAF official working in the Force Reintegration Cell.
517 Former DDR official.
518 Human Rights Watch researcher.
519 Former DDR official.
520 British officer.
521 Former DDR official.
522 ISAF PRT official in Uruzgan.
523 Former DDR official.
524 Former DDR official.
525 Former British officer.
526 Analyst for non-governmental organisation.
527 Analyst for non-governmental organisation.
528 Dutch Ministry of Defense official.
529 UNAMA official.
530 Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs official.
531 Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs official.
532 Dutch Ministry of Defense official.
533 Dutch Embassy in Kabul official.
534 Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade official.
535 U.S. Special Operations Forces officer.
536 UN official in Baghlan.
537 ISAF official working in the F-RIC.
538 ISAF official.
539 Analyst for a non-governmental organisation.
540 Former senior UN official.
541 Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs official.
542 Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade official.
543 Analyst based in the U.K.
544 Analyst based in the U.S.
545 ISAF official working in the Force Reintegration Cell.
546 ISAF official working in the Force Reintegration Cell.
547 Former senior DDR official.
548 Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs official.
549 Former cultural advisor for the British army in Helmand.
550 U.S. Special Operations Forces commander.
551 Analyst for a non-governmental organisation.
552 Analyst based in Germany.
553 Analyst based in the U.K.
554 Former U.S. Department of Defence official.
555 Analyst based in Canada.
556 Analyst based in the U.K.
557 Analyst based in Kabul.
558 Former USAID official.

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